

**In the Eye of the Beholder: Perceptions of Ecotourism in Algonquin
Provincial Park**

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Since its inception, ecotourism has been promoted as a solution to some of the problems of biodiversity conservation. It has been touted as having the potential to balance the diverse interests of various publics by ensuring the protection of landscapes from development and extraction, offering unique tourism experiences, contributing economically to local communities, and fostering support for conservation efforts. Inconsistent success in achieving these goals, however, suggests that the effectiveness of ecotourism ought to be assessed on a case-specific rather than an industry-wide basis. Further, different stakeholders are likely to perceive the impacts of ecotourism in very different manners. The research on ecotourism and conservation rarely considers multiple perspectives, instead reflecting a one-sided understanding of the issues. As a step towards addressing these shortcomings, this thesis brings to light differing perspectives of ecotourism at the site of Algonquin Provincial Park. Through interviews and surveys, I uncover differences in conceptualisations of key ideas of conservation, knowledge of Algonquin Park, and perspectives of ecotourism between two primary groups of participants: tourists visiting the park and residents living in surrounding areas. Their responses reveal that, to residents, the park is a representation of livelihood; for tourists, the park represents “pristine nature.” The park is staged for its various publics, strategically representing only those aspects that will be looked upon favourably to a given group. These multiple constructions may be beneficial, however, as diverse viewpoints of these participants prompted attitudes and behaviours that were advantageous to the varied objectives of the park’s mandate, ultimately contributing to the success of the park as a site of landscape and biodiversity conservation.

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Dedication

To Mom, Dad, Kali, and Alex.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Human-Environment Relationship

*Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.*

*And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.*

(William Wordsworth 1798, from “The Tables Turned”)

The Romantic era, during which Wordsworth wrote these words, marked a distinct shift in the manner in which many throughout the Western world perceived and valued the natural environment (Huth 1990[1957]:30-31; Nash 2001:45). “Nature,” in previous eras, was at best seen as a state that humans must overcome and conquer (Hobbes 1657); at worst it was perceived with fear and disdain (Nash 2001:45). In the mid-eighteen century, however, partly in reaction to the developments of the Industrial Revolution, humankind’s relationship with nature began to change (Nash 2001:45). The contempt that many across the West had for nature began to fade with the rise of Romanticism, and a widespread sense of awe and respect slowly developed (Huth 1990[1957]:34; Nash 2001:45). Wilderness was associated with godliness, and poets, artists, and musicians began to seek it out for inspiration (Huth 1990[1957]:40-53). Others followed suit, pursuing in nature a peaceful and godly experience that was elusive in city life (Nash 2001:46-47). As Nash describes, “they turned to unkempt forest... Wilderness appealed to those bored or disgusted with man and his works” (2001:47). The notion of using nature to “get away from it all” was born.

In addition to garnering such appreciation and respect, the idea of “nature” also spurred a growing concern throughout the West. The path of environmental destruction left by the Industrial Revolution, coupled with the awe and love of nature that permeated public consciousness, prompted early interest in conservation in the late nineteenth century. This interest took hold in part through the founding of organisations such as the Sierra Club, and in the establishment of a system of parks and protected areas throughout North America (Strong 1990:xvi).

Though the newfound “conservation ethic” helped to set the groundwork for the creation of the park system in North America, it was not the primary motive. While “nature” had begun to elicit a public sense of appreciation, it was also largely valued for its resources and utilitarian functions. The establishment of parks was seen as a way to capitalise on both sets of values (Killan 1993:1; Kopas 2007:1; Sellars 1997:7). The first national parks were intended as a means of protecting the environment and resources contained within them, in the wake of the rapid destruction that had been wrought by the Industrial Revolution (Killan 1993:1). The motivation to conserve nature was less for the continuation of its aesthetic appeal, and more for its utilitarian functions (Bella 1987:ix; Kopas 2007:28; Sellars 1997:9-10). The notion of protecting natural areas arose largely from the realisation that the resources contained in the environment – minerals, timber, and game – were not unlimited and were likely to be exploited to the point of depletion if extraction activities continued unchecked (Killan 1993:6).

Thus, beginning in the United States with the establishment of Yellowstone in 1872 (Rettie 1995:1; Sellars 1997:6; Wright and Mattson 1996:7) and in Canada with the 1885 establishment of Banff (Bella 1987:1-2; Kopas 2007; Lothian 1987:10), the concept of the national park was born under the “wise use” philosophy that emphasized conservation for

utilitarian purposes (Killan 1993:1,6; Kopas 2007:28; Strong 1990:xvi). These parks, and others that followed at the end of the nineteenth century, allowed resource extraction activities, such as mining and logging, to continue within their boundaries (Bella 1987:2; Sellars 1997:16). As Sellars describes,

“In many ways, the national park movement pitted one utilitarian urge – tourism and public recreation – against another – the consumptive use of natural resources, such as logging, mining, and reservoir development.
(Sellars 1997:15-16)

Very little of the motivation behind this movement stemmed from a desire to preserve the aesthetic qualities of nature, but rather from the drive to create profit through both tourism and resource extraction (Bella 1987; Killan 1993; Kopas 2007; Sellars 1997; Wright and Mattson 1996).

A shift in these motivations began to take hold in the U.S. in the early years of the twentieth century, during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt (Runte 1997:70-73; Sellars 1997:11). It was during his administration that conservation, as it is widely understood today, began to gain greater popularity (Sellars 1997:13). Roosevelt, along with his advisor of forestry, Gifford Pinchot, strongly endorsed the utilitarian use of resources (Runte 1997:70-73; Strong 1990:xvi), but won support of preservationists by instating the protection of sites with primarily scenic, rather than utilitarian, significance (Runte 1997:72; Sellars 1997:13). By the end of his presidency, Roosevelt had created five new national parks and over 100,000,000 acres of new national forest (Runte 1997:70; Sellars 1997:13). The conservation movement in Canada similarly followed suit, gaining strength in the first decades of the twentieth century (Bella 1987:36). By 1930, policies had been passed to widely eliminate resource extraction activities in Canada’s national parks, and the focus of both the park system and of public perspective shifted to conservation for the purposes of environmental protection (Bella 1987:2,36; Kopas 2007:28).

This early environmental movement ebbed and flowed for many decades, as research progressed and environmental policies were enacted, but public interest sometimes waned in light of more pressing issues in the first half of the twentieth century (Strong 1990:xvi-xviii). It was reignited with fervour, however, in the post-World War II era. Samuel Hays (1998) outlines a broad timeline of the conservation movement, suggesting that concern about environment destruction grew in response to the increased development and productivity of the 1950s. Public discourse regarding air and water pollution began to take shape, and following these developments, the association between the environment and health prompted discussions of conservation and futurity. Since the 1970s, environmental conservation has been a topic of great significance in public discourse, prompting the foundation of organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund, the enactment of many policies, and the implementation of countless projects globally, all with the aim of protecting the earth, its resources, and biodiversity (Hays 1998; Strong 1990:xvii-xxi).

Current Approaches to Conservation

Despite its tremendous popularity in recent decades, however, there remains significant debate about how to approach conservation, and the movement as a whole has experienced inconsistent success at best. Since the beginning biodiversity conservation efforts have tended to adopt one of two primary approaches: a barriers-based (protectionist) approach, involving the total protection of a particular area from human activity, or a community-based approach, involving collaboration with and participation of local populations in conservation projects. Both of these approaches, though heterogeneous in their strategies, hold a troubling commonality in that they have largely failed to achieve their intended results (Brosius and Russell 2003:41, 55; Hutton et al. 2005:360; Oates 1999).

Stemming from the relative lack of success, many in the field of conservation have sought out alternative approaches. One such alternative, which has rapidly gained popularity throughout the last two decades, is ecotourism. Ecotourism has been lauded for its potential to contribute to biodiversity conservation, as well as community development and economic prosperity (Carrier and Macleod 2005:315-6; Fennell 2009:372; Kruger 2005:579-80; Stronza and Gordillo 2008:449). Like other conservation strategies, however, ecotourism projects have garnered mixed results, exhibiting highly inconsistent impacts on both biodiversity and the local people it is purported to benefit. The complexity of the underlying factors makes it difficult to draw broad conclusions about the efficacy of the ecotourism industry to fulfill its self-proclaimed objectives. The only consistent conclusion that arises from research on the subject is that the success of ecotourism can only be measured on a site-specific basis (Carrier and Macleod 2005; Fennell 2009; Kiss 2004; Kruger 2005; McGahey 2012; Stronza and Gordillo 2008).

Research Project

As one of Ontario's largest and most well known parks, Algonquin Provincial Park is a popular destination for ecotourism year-round. Certain stated goals of the park, to protect "natural and cultural features", to provide visitors a variety of "low-intensity recreational, wilderness, and natural environment experiences", and to contribute to "economic, social, and cultural life of the region" (Ontario Parks 1998:6) parallel the underlying philosophies of ecotourism. Goals, however, are not always mirrored in reality, as demonstrated by the varying success levels achieved within the ecotourism industry. This project addresses question of how successful Algonquin Park, as a single ecotourism destination, has been in achieving its self-professed aims.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of individuals involved in and impacted by ecotourism in Algonquin Park. There exists a substantial body of research devoted to investigating various aspects of the ecotourism industry, particularly with respect to its conservation and economic potentials. These perceived benefits are a product of the grand expectations placed on ecotourism since its inception - to be a panacea for all the conservation difficulties of the past. (Carrier and Macleod 2005:315-6; Fennell 2009:372; Kruger 2005:579-80; Stronza and Gordillo 2008:449). However, other aspects of the impacts of ecotourism, particularly the manner in which these impacts are perceived and understood by those involved, remain largely unexamined. With this project I am seeking specifically to fill a void in this research with the objective of investigating the differing (and at times conflicting) perspectives regarding these impacts among tourists and local residents. Specifically, I am addressing questions that encompass three related themes:

- 1) How do tourists and residents conceptualise some of the main ideas that underlie ecotourism and conservation discourse?
- 2) How much do tourists and residents know about Algonquin Park in terms of the knowledge structures commonly used in conservation biology (e.g. speciosity)?
- 3) How do tourists and residents perceive the impacts of ecotourism, on the park and its wildlife, and on the communities surrounding the park?

In Chapter 2, I review of the body of literature examining the manners in which concepts driving the conservation discourse are created, understood, and valued, as well as an examination of the literature devoted to the study of ecotourism. Following this review, I outline the details of the study site and the research methods utilised in Chapter 3. I then delve into my research results in Chapters 4-6 with a chapter dedicated to each of the primary themes: conceptualisations of key ideas, knowledge of the park, and perspectives on ecotourism. To conclude, I provide an analysis of the results, comparing the responses of tourists to those of

residents within the three central themes and discussing the implications of these results and directions for future research.

Significance of Research

Throughout much of its history, ecotourism has been touted as having great potential benefits for both conservation projects and local communities (Carrier and Macleod 2005:315-6; Fennell 2009:372; Kruger 2005:579-80; Stronza and Gordillo 2008:449). As such, much research has been devoted to investigating the economic and conservation-related aspects of this industry. However, the perspectives and assessments of various publics involved in ecotourism operations are not always considered equally, if at all. This project is a step toward filling this academic shortcoming. I examine the perceptions of tourists to Algonquin Park and residents in the area, asking specifically about their knowledge of the site and how they perceive the impacts of their activities on both the forests and the local communities. Additionally, my research explores the perceptions held by all participants regarding concepts of biodiversity and ecological integrity, and the value associated with both.

In performing this study, I thus explicitly examined the views and opinions of two “publics”, comprising ecotourists and residents living in the area, and investigated aspects of Algonquin Park and the manner in which it is presented. My findings shed light on the different understandings that these publics hold, not only of the site itself but also of ideas that underlie a broader conservation discourse. Such perceptions are additionally considered in the context of how the park has been presented to these differing publics. This comparison of perspective and presentation offers insight into the value of “staging” the park for specific audiences in an effort to achieve not only the stated goals of the park, but also of the ecotourism industry and of conservation as a whole. Thus, this research has implications for the multiple publics: those most

directly involved in the project (that is, ecotourists in Algonquin Park and local residents around the park), those invested in managing and governing Algonquin Park; and those involved in other conservation efforts who are seeking to engage the broader public.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Discussion and Literature Review

Approaches to Conservation

An examination of the existing literature on the subject of biodiversity conservation and conservation theory reveals a lack of consensus among expert perspectives. This dissonance stems from disagreement as to the most effective and appropriate manner in which to approach conservation in order to maximise success. Various researchers have analysed trends in the approaches used in conservation efforts, illustrating a dichotomy between those who advocate for community-focused conservation strategies and those promoting protectionist strategies (Brosius and Russell 2003; Hutton et al. 2005; Takacs 1996). In recent decades, community-based strategies that focus on and take into account local peoples in their approach have gained popularity amongst conservationists (Brosius and Russell 2003; Hutton et al. 2005). A number of researchers argue that efforts that lack consideration for community action and involvement in conservation projects merely offer a narrow, one-sided perspective that fails to grasp the entirety of the issue at hand (Brosius and Russell 2003; Hill 2002; Hutton et al. 2005). Hutton and colleagues (2005) go further, maintaining that the dominance of authoritarian science-based approaches must be questioned and ultimately countermanded in favour of multi-disciplinary and community-focused collaborations. Likewise, Brosius and Russell (2003) reason that conservation biology alone provides an inadequate framework from which to base our understanding of conservation issues, arguing for a more holistic and collaborative approach.

Despite a growing number of proponents supporting community-based strategies and the increase in Integrated Conservation Development Programs, which combine conservation projects with social development goals (Oates 1999), the notion of a barriers-based, or protectionist, approach to biodiversity conservation dominated the field throughout much of the

past century (Hutton et al. 2005:341). Although its dominance has waned somewhat in more recent years, this strategy remains a popular conceptualisation of how conservation ought to be achieved, with numerous supporters throughout the field. For example, Oates (1999) argues that community participation and collaboration complicate conservation efforts unnecessarily and thus will continue to fall short of the desired outcomes. Similarly, Redford (1992) asserts that community-based and collaborative strategies are simply unrealistic, romanticising a serious problem with unattainable ideas of cooperation and collaboration. Finally, others put forth the argument against community-based conservation in the name of science, maintaining that these approaches lack empirically demonstrated results and ignore the authority of trained experts (Attwell and Cotterill 2000; Robinson 2006). However, the practice of conservation is in its infancy, and neither approach is effectively slowing the destruction of biodiversity and natural resources on a consistent basis. Furthermore, it is evident that protectionist approaches have limited applicability – one cannot place a fence around the entire planet – and programs must engage with local communities (Schwartzman et al. 2000).

Deconstructing the Concepts

Stemming partially from this debate, an additional body of research exists that delves deeper into the notion of conservation itself, deconstructing underlying dynamics to problematize the foundations of the conservation movement. Arturo Escobar (1998; 2006) advocates approaches that account for a variety of perspectives to understanding environmental conservation. He argues that economic, ecological, and cultural aspects are interrelated forces, and consideration of each is essential for future environmental work. Furthermore, in various works Escobar (1996; 1998; 1999; 2006) and others (Hill 2002; Mace 2004; Takacs 1996;) deconstruct key concepts that underlie conservation efforts, thus encouraging the rejection of

essentialist perspectives in favour of a more multi-dimensional approach. These authors contribute to a re-thinking of current conservation theory, involving a questioning of “facts” and acknowledgment of alternative perspectives.

The vast majority of conservation projects are born of similar ideologies, which results in the perpetuation of particular conceptualisations and ideas within a dominant conservation discourse. Running through this discourse are notions such as “nature,” “biodiversity,” and “sustainability,” which are at the root of what drives conservation efforts (Agapow et al. 2004; Escobar 1998, 1999; Mace 2004; Rojas 1992; Takacs 1996). These terms, and the ideas with which they are associated, are disseminated by conservationists as concrete, objective facts. They are treated as scientific truths upon which the tenets of conservation are based; entities that can be defined, identified, and protected (Escobar 1996, 1998, 1999; Takacs 1996). Its supposed objectivity has earned “science” an elevated position of utmost authority within Western discourse (Marks 2009), and thus conveying these concepts as objective entities appeals to the value placed in “science” within Western society. This association with “scientific facts” adds to the perceived credibility of conservation efforts, thus garnering support from the publics in which they are initiated (Takacs 1996).

However, this discourse fails to recognise both the socially constructed nature of these concepts that drive conservation, as well as their inherent subjectivity and flexibility. The dominant perspectives driving conservation, like all perspectives, arise from particular paradigms and are situated within specific experiences, and are thus necessarily partial in nature (Campbell and Rice 2011; Haraway 1988). Neglecting to recognise alternative systems of knowledge makes it impossible to gain a holistic understanding of the bigger issues in conservation. Furthermore, the consistent failure to acknowledge the “constructedness” of the discourse, seen in terms such

as “nature” and “biodiversity,” impedes the ability of conservation strategies to achieve long-term success. For conservation efforts to achieve success beyond limited protected areas – that is, outside of a national or provincial park – they must garner the cooperation of local communities. To gain such support, consideration of a multiplicity of perspectives is critical.

“Nature”

Perhaps the most rudimentary concept underlying the notion of conservation is that of “nature”. The idea of “nature” predates any of the current attitudes and sentiments that have been popularised in modern environmental discourse. Indeed, Williams argues that the term is so deeply embedded in both public discourse and consciousness that “[a]ny full history of the uses of nature would be a history of a large part of human thought (2011[1976]:186). With such a deep-rooted history, the conceptualisation, and thus the definition, of this term has been ever evolving. As the idea of “nature” became recognised as one of the central principles of conservation and the overall green movement throughout the last several decades, its precise meaning became a growing focus of attention (Braun 2008:668; Cronon 1996:7; Lamb 1996:475).

The term “nature” conjures up many images, and its conceptualisation is likely to differ between different individuals and contexts. As such, a satisfactory definition of the term has been elusive (Demeritt 2002:767; Grimwood and Doubleday 2013:54 Lamb 1996:475; McIsaac and Brün 1999:1; Ryan 2002:267). Some authors have argued that such a definition can never be established, as the notion of “nature” is a wholly social construction, its interpreted meaning susceptible to the influence of culture (Greider and Garkovich 1994:1), history (Escobar 1996:60), and individual paradigms (Lamb 1996:475; McIsaac and Brün 1999:2). Providing the most basic example of the variability in our understanding of this concept, the Merriam-Webster

dictionary provides no fewer than nine definitions of the word. Such definitional multiplicity demonstrates the diversity of interpretations and perspectives that may be attached to the term “nature”. Still, like any term, “nature” conjures shared meanings to many drawing from a similar paradigm. As a Western construction, “nature” is inevitably tied to notions such as the environment, the Earth, wildlife, and wilderness. However, beyond such general associations, conceptualisations of “nature” veer off into many directions.

Perhaps the key debate in the question of “what is nature?” revolves around the inclusion or exclusion of humans (Escobar 1996:60-61; Greider and Garkovich 1994:5; Lamb 196:480; McIsaac and Brün 1999:3). Throughout history, many theorists have contemplated the relationship between humans and nature (McIsaac and Brün 1999:6). Difficulties in defining such a general term as “nature” have driven many to define it by what it is not rather than by what it is. In many cases, literature thusly defines nature as “all that is untouched by humans” (McIsaac and Brün 1999:5). “Culture”, representative of humankind, is thought to be the antonym of nature (Demeritt 2002:775; Grimwood and Henderson 2009:6-7; Lamb 1996:477; McIsaac and Brün 1999:5; Vos 2007:336). Such definitions hold to the idea of nature as pristine, sacred, and pure, while viewing humans, as forces outside of nature, entirely as a threat (Demeritt 2002:775; Lamb 1996:477; McIsaac and Brün 1999:1). As Waitt and Cook (2007:544) discovered through interviews with ecotourists in Thailand, this view is prevalent within public perception of “nature.”

While the definition of “nature” as a pristine entity of which humans are not a part has traditionally been the dominant view (Vos 2007:336), it is frequently disputed by others who maintain that humans, as animals, are very much a part of “nature”. Those on this side of the debate argue that to exclude humans from one’s perception of nature presents a flawed view of

nature and how we ought to conserve it (Ryan 2002:267; Wilson 1991:13). Cronon (1996) takes this view to the extreme to illustrate the fallacy of the human-nature dichotomy:

“If we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild then our very presence in nature represents its fall. The place where we are is the place where nature is not... If nature dies when we enter it, then the only way to save nature is to kill ourselves”

(Cronon 1996:17-19)

Others take a less severe approach to this same argument, asserting that the exclusion of humans from nature fails to consider the influence that humans have had on all “nature” for the entirety of our existence; “pure” nature does not exist (Cronon 1996:18-19; Grimwood 2011:50; McIsaac and Brün 1999:1; McKibben 1989:82). Thoreau summed up this perspective most succinctly, stating that we as humans are merely “nature looking into nature” (1958:45).

Other perspectives fall somewhere in between the two ends of the spectrum. Centuries ago, Thomas Hobbes famously contended that, though born into nature, humans must work to separate themselves from it, as life in nature was “nasty, brutish, and short” (1657:1000). In the late 19th century, Émile Durkheim suggested that humans were simply at the top of the hierarchy of nature (Gross 2000:281-282); humanity’s status and subsequent ability to assert control over nature de-naturalises us to some degree. More recently, others have maintained that humans may be considered to be part of nature, but only to an extent. For example, while humans themselves may be “as natural as... any other species” (McIsaac and Brün 1999:1), material culture may fall outside the realm of “nature” (McIsaac and Brün 1999:3).

The variability in the way in which “nature” is conceptualised and defined is hardly surprising; it is a generalised term, one that can clearly embody a number of different ideas. However, this lack of consensus presents a problem when “nature” becomes the object of conservation (Lamb 1996:475; McIsaac and Brün 1999:1; Proctor 1995:288; Schuyler 1999:5).

Lack of agreement on this definitional issue has surely contributed to the division in approaches to conservation (Grimwood 2011:57; McIsaac and Brün 1999:1; Proctor 1995:288). A protectionist approach lends itself to the perspective that sees humans as separate from nature; if any human influence disrupts “pure” nature, then protecting areas from any human activity is the only way to conserve “nature” (McIsaac and Brün 1999:1). Indeed, the human exclusion perspective of nature and the protectionist approach to conservation both dominated over other alternatives throughout much of the 20th century (McIsaac and Brün 1999:1). As the view of nature including humans has gained prominence, so have approaches to conservation that incorporate and accept human activity (McIsaac and Brün 1999:1). The variability in the definition of “nature” not only affects opinions on *how* conservation ought be done, but also on *what* ought to be conserved. Schuyler illustrates this, arguing that, “[i]f we see ourselves and what we do as part of nature, instead of as separate from nature, an anthill and an apartment building are both equally natural” (1999:5).

Since there is little likelihood of achieving consensus as to the meaning of such a broad term, some argue that “nature” should be defined on a case-specific basis (Braun 2008:667; Lamb 1996:479; McIsaac and Brün 1999:9). Others have argued for rethinking and reconstructing the concept in its entirety (Escobar 1996:59-60; Haraway 1989). More commonly, however, conservation discourse has shifted the focus away from the loose concept of “nature” (Braun 2008:667; Lamb 1996:479). “Nature” has been displaced as the object of conservation by a variety of more specific, seemingly more objective, concepts such as “endangered species” and “biodiversity”.

“Biodiversity”

Throughout much of the history of conservation, the idea of “species,” or more specifically “endangered species,” has been utilised as a primary driving force upon which conservation was founded (Takacs 1996:41). This term has enabled an appeal for public support, in that experts utilise the conceptualisation of discrete identifiable species to measure species abundance and geographic species concentration. Today, although the discourse of “endangered species” remains pervasive and critical, many conservation efforts are powered by a somewhat different concept: biodiversity. The idea of biodiversity is arguably the single most powerful driving force behind the notion of conservation today (Takacs 1996). The term “biodiversity” has strong connotations of objectivity and factuality, falling very much in line with a powerful scientific discourse. Through the use of this seemingly objective term, the discourse of conservation promotes itself as an endeavour founded in universal, scientific facts.

With its assumptions of objectivity, truth, and universality, one would expect the concept of biodiversity to be easily definable and identifiable. However, Takacs (1996) posed the seemingly simple question of “What is biodiversity?” to a host of conservation experts, and the diversity of responses illustrates the lack of a unified definition or conceptualisation of what is truly meant by “biodiversity”:

“It’s the number of species and the uniqueness of species.”
(Hugh Iltis, in Takacs 1996:48)

“To me, biodiversity is the living resources of the planet.”
(Paul Ehrlich, in Takacs 1996:47)

“[After laughing at the suggestion that this was the most difficult question of the interview] It really is, and I’m sure you get long rambling answers and explanations. Because it’s something we’ve gone round and round about.”
(Vickie Funk, in Takacs 1996:48)

“I don’t have a definition of biodiversity.”

(David Ehrenfeld, in Takacs 1996:46)

“Biodiversity is the total number of genetic lineages on earth. I just made that up; if I think about it, chances are I’ll change my definition rapidly.”

(Thomas Eisner, in Takacs 1996:47)

The existence of this much variability in the definitions (or lack thereof) of biodiversity simply among experts in conservation, all of whom are operating within a relatively homogeneous Western scientific paradigm, contradicts the assumption of universal objectivity that often accompanies it. This contradiction is not unwarranted, as this term is not the naturally occurring fact it is perceived to be, but rather very much a social construction built for a particular purpose. The term “biodiversity” itself can be traced to the 1980s, where it was first coined at the National Forum for BioDiversity (Escobar 1998:54, Takacs 1996:37). That the term has its roots in a conference for conservation makes it clear that it was imagined and coined within a very particular discourse and for a very particular purpose. It served this purpose well, providing a buzzword to which the public could relate, thus initiating discussion and garnering support for conservation efforts (Escobar 1996, 1998; Takacs 1996). This discourse soon progressed to a discussion of “biological crisis” stemming from the concept of biodiversity (Escobar 1998). As Takacs argues, concepts of “biodiversity” and “biological crisis” are tools “for the defense of a particular social construction of nature that recognises and rues the destruction of ‘nature’ and life on earth” (1996:12). Like the notions of nature, sustainability, species, and other critical concepts within the conservation discourse, biodiversity is a specific social construction, perpetuating a façade of universality to serve particular aims.

“Sustainability”

The concept of “sustainability” experienced a similar rise in popularity around the same time as the advent of “biodiversity” and fuelled by many of the same factors (Basiago 1995:109;

Brown et al. 1987:717; Escobar 1996:45; Lélé and Norgaard 1996:355; McKenzie 2004:2; Sverdrup and Svensson 2005:143; Toman 1999:251; Vos 2007:334). Basiago (1995:109) traces the first usage of the term to 1972 publication from *The Ecologist* entitled “A Blueprint for Survival”, but there is considerable consensus that it was not until the Brundtland Commission in 1987 that “sustainability” truly permeated both conservation discourse and public consciousness (Basiago 1995:109; Escobar 1996:48; McKenzie 2004:2; Toman 1999:251; Vos 2007:334). The concept took hold within environmental discourse as the main objective that could ensure the continued vitality of the earth, its resources, and humanities (Basiago 1995:109; Brown et al. 1987:713; McKenzie 2004:1; Vos 2007:334). The popularity of “sustainability” has not waned since its veritable explosion in the early 1990s, proliferating not only conservation and development discourses, but also having been applied to economics, business, policy making, and natural sciences (Brown et al. 1987:713; Vos 2007:335). Despite the ubiquity of the concept, however, its true definition, like that of so many concepts in conservation, is hardly a universal consensus (Vos 2007:334-335).

Lélé and Norgaard point out that “[s]horn of specific connotations and nuances, sustainability is simply the ability to maintain something undiminished over some time period” (1996:355). However, attempts to discern any further definitional specificity elicit much discussion and disagreement (Costanza and Patten 1995:193; Lélé and Norgaard 1996:355; Sverdrup and Svensson 2005:146; Toman 1999:251). Some argue that the concept can never be truly defined, and that attempts to do so are fruitless (Basiago 1995:111; Costanza and Patten 1995:193). Others maintain that it can and should be defined, but that definitions must be case-specific and must explicitly account for a number of factors, such as *what* is to be sustained, and for *how long* (Costanza and Patten 1995:193; Lélé and Norgaard 1996:355; Vos 2007:334).

Much of the uncertainty surrounding the notion of “sustainability” is due to the broad range of contexts to which it may be applied (Brown et al. 1987:713; Costanza and Patten 1995; Sutton 2000; Sverdrup and Svensson 2005; Toman 1999; Vos 2007:335). The original and predominant application of the term was in reference to maintaining ecological systems and natural resources (Basiago 1995:111; Brown et al. 1987:714; Costanza and Patten 1995:193-194; McKenzie 2004; Sutton 2000; Sverdrup and Svensson 2005:144; Toman 1999:252). However, there has been growing discussion of “economic sustainability”, referring to the continued success of “nature-based” production and the maintenance natural resources as a form of capital (Basiago 1995:111; Costanza and Patten 1995:193-194; Sutton 2000; Sverdrup and Svensson 2005:144; Toman 1999:252). “Sustainability” has also become a growing focus in the social sciences, leading to discussions of “social sustainability” relating to aspects of culture, human needs, and individual wellbeing (Basiago 1995:111; Brown et al. 1987:716; McKenzie 2004; Sutton 2000; Sverdrup and Svensson 2005:144; Toman 1999:252). Sutton suggests that “increasingly many people mean ecological *and* social *and* economic sustainability... when they use the term ‘sustainability’ without qualifying it,” (2000, emphasis in original).

Costanza and Patten argue that “what passes as *definitions* of sustainability are... often *predictions* of actions... that one hopes will lead to sustainability” (1995:194, emphasis in original). Similarly, Vos (2007:335) iterates the tendency to avoid the issues of defining “sustainability” by focusing instead on the notion of unsustainability, or what sustainability is *not*. Many discussions of “sustainability” simply avoid the issue altogether, reducing “sustainability” to but a rather vague buzzword (Brown et al. 1987:713; Vos 2007:339). While having a single, unanimous definition may be both unnecessary and impossible, lack of shared meaning or the complete lack of a definition can severely impede efforts of achieving it (Vos

2007:337). Like “biodiversity”, “sustainability” was popularised as a scientific, objective term to drive public conservation discourse, but its lack of contextual specificity and definitional stability has depleted much of its original significance (Basiago 1995:118; Lélé and Norgaard 1996:356; McKenzie 2004:1; Vos 2007:339).

Deconstructing the Values

It has thus become clear that concepts of nature, biodiversity, and sustainability exist primarily as social facts, with a definitional malleability dependent on the source and purpose for which they are used. Why then do experts consistently operate through a discourse of universality, masking alternative conceptualisations that offer a variety of perspectives to inform these efforts (see Bentley et al. 2010; Chiu et al. 2014; Loon and Polakow 2001; Lu and Stepchenkova 2012; Zhou et al. 2013)? Simply put, this univocal discourse is in many ways conducive to the enactment of conservation projects. The perception of “sustainability” as a tangible, unified notion creates an achievable goal toward which a public can seemingly take concrete action. The imagining of “biodiversity” as a discrete, definable entity enables a public to easily relate to and find value in this notion. Further, the connotations of factuality associated with this term can serve as a valuable tool to allow conservationists to secure funding. To illustrate this, Takacs compares the concept of “biodiversity” to the similar notion of “wilderness” (1996:41-42). He argues that the idea of wilderness is open to vast interpretation and lacks specificity in its imagining (Takacs 1996:41). Unlike this “soft” concept of wilderness, the term “biodiversity” was coined anew to serve certain purposes (Takacs 1996:41-42). Despite its definitional murkiness, it is seen to be concrete and identifiable; it is the objective alternative to the subjectivity of wilderness. Its portrayal as objective is key in attributing it power as a mechanism in conservation.

Many of the concepts underlying conservation discourse are imbued with notions of concreteness, objectivity, and factuality, very much in line with scientific authority and propagating an assumption of inherent universality (Rojas 1992; Escobar 1996, 1998, 1999; Takacs 1996;). Attached to the notion that these ideas are universally constant is an understanding of universally consistent value judgments. In a discourse that values science, these concepts are valued as objective entities to be protected, as keys to knowledge, and as beneficial (in their preservation) to all humankind. This presumed universality of conceptualisations and valuations enables a consistency within the discourse about the motivations and goals of conservation (Takacs 1996).

As with definitions, however, these valuations arise from very particular ideologies. The values attached to these ideas are highly variable across cultures, regions, and populations. Arguments that a given species has “intrinsic moral value,” (Hill 2002:1191), or that “loss of biodiversity *should be avoided* wherever possible,” (Hill 2002:1192, emphasis added) perpetuate particular judgements of the value of species, biodiversity, and nature in general. This deeply embedded value system neglects the possibility of any alternatives. For example, Jaffe describes the case of Ghana’s Kakum National Park, in which the conservation mission was “to protect the rainforest and its diverse wildlife” through increased enforcement of boundaries of the area and implementation of tourism (2006:219-220). In the conservation discourse, the biodiversity of the forest was perceived to hold intrinsic value, value that was diminished through the disruption or loss of any plants or animals. For local residents living around the park, however, the wildlife of the park has a very different value. The forest, prior to its increased protection, provided housing materials, medicinal herbs, and food (Jaffe 2006:219). For residents, the total protection of the forest eliminates its value, which lies primarily in its consumption. While a conservationist may

be focused on the “intrinsic moral value” of a forest, an individual who depends its resources for wellbeing and livelihood is apt to have a very different perspective about its value. Where conservationists may see biodiversity, local residents may view the environment as a source of life, a source of clean water, natural resources, or income (Brosius and Russell 2003; Peterson et al. 2010). Different perspectives of value do not always mean that there does not exist a shared interest in conservation, but motivations for conservation may differ greatly.

The one-sidedness of conservation theory and discourse neglects potential variability in the value judgments. The meaning and relative value of “nature,” “biodiversity,” and “sustainability” are intertwined in a complex of ecological, economic, scientific, moral, and cultural practices. As Campbell and Rice point out, the manner in which people understand the world depends on what their “previous visual and conceptual experience has taught them” (2011:56). Bias, assumptions, experiences, and situation all contribute to altering one’s perspectives. With the diversity of actors involved in conservation efforts, paradigmatic variation is guaranteed. Without consideration for these discrepancies, goals of different parties implicated in conservation are likely to continuously clash, thus impeding these efforts.

The Future of Conservation

Given the preceding discussion, I argue that conservation is currently situated within a paradox. By emphasising assumptions of objectivity and factuality, conservation situates itself within the realm of “science” and consequently adopts an air of authority and factuality. This serves a valuable purpose at the outset of conservation projects by offering an element of credibility to the public in which they are instigated, thus garnering support, popularity, and funding necessary for their realisation (Escobar 1998; Mace 2004; Takacs 1996). However, as has been seen, current strategies of conservation have by and large failed to achieve desired

success levels (Attwell and Cotterill 2000; Brosius and Russell 2003; Hill 2002; Hutton et al. 2005; Oates 1999; Robinson 2006). The lack of success is attributable, at least in part, to a failure to consider the multiplicity of conceptualisations and valuations related to conservation efforts. The one-sidedness of the discourse from which conservation arises is fundamental to the birth of these projects but is also a major contributor to their failures.

Donna Haraway (1988) advocates for anthropologists to take a metaphorical step back, to question the notion of objectivity, to realise the “situatedness” of our knowledge, and to appreciate the existence of alternate perspectives. These tenets could be applied to great use in the various fields of conservation. To temporarily distance ourselves from the one-sided discourse that dominates the field and to consider dissenting perspectives of other parties involved in the realisation of these projects would be critical steps towards developing a more holistic approach, one with more potential for success. If conservationists, organisations, and publics (both global and local) each contribute “partial perspectives” (Haraway 1988), it is only through an amalgamation of these partial perspectives that a more holistic understanding of the issues can be fashioned. In recent years, ecotourism has gained popularity in the realm of conservation as an embodiment of this “drastic re-imagining” of the field that has grown increasingly necessary.

Ecotourism

Conservation and tourism can be highly antagonistic forces, as the former sets out to protect and preserve biodiversity while the latter often results in its damage and destruction (Stronza and Gordillo 2009:448-449). It is thus ironic that a sector of the tourism industry has been touted as a potential tool for conservation (Fennell 2009:372; Kiss 2004:232; Kruger 2005:579; Stronza and Gordillo 2008:449). Ecotourism has been rapidly rising in popularity

since the late 1980s, promoted as a potential solution in the realm of conservation (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Coria and Calfucura 2012; Fennell 2009; Kruger 2005; Stem et al. 2003). Since its early days, proponents of ecotourism have praised it as an industry compatible with the oft-conflicting aims of both biodiversity conservation and community development (Björk 2007:24), citing it as the compromise between the protectionist and community-based approaches to conservation.

Despite high expectations, however, studies of ecotourism have indicated mixed results at best. The ecotourism industry has often failed to fulfill its claims of benefiting both biodiversity and human communities. With respect to conservation, proponents of ecotourism argue that the industry can contribute financially to conservation efforts (Kruger 2005; Stem et al. 2003), raise awareness of environmental issues (Fennell 2009; Kruger 2005), and influence policies surrounding land use and protection (Kiss 2004; Kruger 2005; Russell and Wallace 2004). Ecotourism projects are further intended to encourage the participation of local people, contribute to the improvement of local economies, and consequently generate positive social impacts for involved communities (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Coria and Calfucura 2012; Kiss 2004; Stem et al. 2003; Stronza and Gordillo 2008; TIES 2012). However, that the industry's achievements have often fallen far short of expectations, as will be illustrated later in this chapter. Without a more critical examination of the factors contributing to both the success and failures of ecotourism on a site-specific basis, individual projects, and thus the industry as a whole, risk a continued failure

The Trajectory of Ecotourism

Definition

One of the primary difficulties in accurately evaluating the impacts of ecotourism is the lack of consensus regarding what constitutes its practice. Some contend that the term “ecotourism” was coined in the early 1980s by Hector Ceballos-Lascurain as part of his conservation work with bird habitats in the Yacutan wetlands (Honey 1999:13; McGahey 2012:75; Scace et al. 1992:7), though some experts contend that the term had its roots more than a decade prior (Björk 2007:24; Fennell 2009; Kruger 2005:584). Minimally, the ideas, philosophies, and ethics that would come to define “ecotourism” had begun to take hold as early as the late 1960s (Björk 2007:24; Kruger 2005:584). Since its conception the definition of ecotourism has seemingly been in a constant state of flux. Analysing the trajectory of the term, Fennell states that there are “literally hundreds of definitions in existence” (2001:403), none of which have achieved complete acceptance amongst experts. He further argues that that this variability suggests that none of the existing definitions can be considered universally accurate (2001:403).

At the most basic level, ecotourism is defined simply as tourism with a focus on “nature” or, alternatively, travel to destinations that are considered to be “natural” areas. (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; Fennell 2001:403; Jaffe 2006:218; Kruger 2005:580). When its sole basis is a concept as loose as “nature”, however, ecotourism can be seen as little more than travel to any locations outside of main urban centres. Anything from observing animals in the confines of a zoo to expensive jungle safaris to backcountry trekking could be argued to be “nature-based” tourism, fulfilling this most basic criterion of ecotourism. Consequently, most understandings of the term elaborate on this definition to incorporate a higher level of specificity. The concept of

ecotourism suggests an environmental focus, an aspect that is conveyed, in various ways, by all definitions of the term. Many experts stress that ecotourism is intended for the appreciation of and engagement with nature, including landscapes, plants, and animals (Blamey 1997:110; Fennell 2001:403; Fennell 2009:373; Jaffe 2006:218; Scace et al. 1992:12; Stronza and Gordillo 2008:448). Most conceptualisations of the term additionally express that ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel that is not disruptive or damaging to the natural areas in which it occurs (Aylward et al 1996; Blamey 1997:110; Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; Coria and Calfucura 2012:47; Fennell 2001:403-404). Many others go further, asserting that ecotourism must go beyond simply exerting minimal impact on natural ecologies and must also actively contribute toward benefitting the environment and conservation efforts (Jaffe 2006:218; Fennell 2001:404; Fennell 2009:373-374; Kruger 2005:579; TIES 2012).

In addition to notions of ecological responsibility, there has been an increasing focus on social aspects of ecotourism, particularly in definitions that have arisen in more recent years (Fennell 2001). Such definitions indicate that ecotourism is travel that benefits not only local ecology but also local communities through economic contribution and tourist engagement with local culture (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Coria and Calfucura 2012; Fennell 2001; Kruger 2005; Stronza and Gordillo 2008). In this way, ecotourism is defined as a tool not only for conservation, but also for sustainable development (Coria and Calfucura 2012:47).

Though varying in many specific details, most current descriptions of ecotourism largely encompass these main ideas, citing both ecological and socioeconomic factors. In what is perhaps the most frequently cited definition of ecotourism, Ceballos-Lascurain succinctly incorporates these principles, stating that it is:

“environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and

any accompanying culture feature – both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations”

(Ceballos-Lascurain 1996:20)

Although neither this nor any other definition has been unanimously accepted, Ceballos-Lascurain’s definition has seemingly garnered the most agreement amongst experts as it expresses many of the philosophies in which ecotourism is grounded and underlines both ecological and socioeconomic factors (Coria and Calfucura 2012:47; Fennell 2001:404; Fennell 2009:373; Kruger 2005:580). However, even among experts, the notion of “ecotourism” has a multiplicity of meanings, as can be discerned from the range of existing definitions. In this project I seek to re-examine this question of the meaning and understanding of “ecotourism” through my research.

Growth of the Industry

Based on its underlying principles, ecotourism appears on the surface to be an ideal solution to achieving the seemingly incompatible goals of conservation and community development. The considerable potential of ecotourism’s primary objectives has not gone unnoticed, and the popularity of the industry has seen rapid growth since its conception over four decades ago (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; Coria and Calfucura 2012:47; Fennell 2009:372; Kruger 2005:584). The driving philosophies of ecotourism had already begun to take hold in the late 1960s and early 1970s, decades prior to the more public popularisation of the concept (Fennell 2009:372-373; Kruger 2005:584). The tenets of ecotourism were well situated within the changing public consciousness of the time, fitting with the increasing popularity of environmental management, community development, and empowerment (Björk 2007:26; Kruger 2005:584; Stem et al. 2003:389-390).

In the early years of ecotourism, its growth was slow. Throughout the 1970s and much of the 1980s, individual ecotourism projects and companies began to appear, but ecotourism as a whole remained a rather minor subset of the tourism industry (Fennell 2009:372; Kruger 2005:584). As the 1980s drew to a close, substantial transformations began to occur. During this time, the idea of sustainability, and the associated notions of environmental responsibility, conservation, and sustainable development, began to permeate public discourse (Fennell 2009:372; Kruger 2005:579; Stem et al. 2003:389-390). There was increasing public concern regarding the environmental impacts of human activities, and thus a desire to reverse ongoing trends of environmental degradation (Stem et al. 2003:389-390). As the environmentally responsible alternative to mass tourism, which had become increasingly criticised for its detrimental effects on the environment, ecotourism was very much in line with evolving public consciousness. Consequently, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the industry's popularity exploded, and it has continued to grow steadily for the past two decades (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; Coria and Calfucura 2012:47; Fennell 2009:372; Kruger 2005:584).

Throughout the 1990s, the growth rate of the ecotourism sector was estimated to be as high as 30 percent per year, which was five times higher than the growth rate of the tourism industry as a whole during the same period (Kruger 2005:580). More recent estimates suggest that ecotourism is growing at a rate of 10-12 percent per year, still exceeding the overall tourism growth rate by nearly threefold (Coria and Calfucura 2012:47). As such, ecotourism has widely been argued to be the "fastest growing sector of the tourism industry" (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315), which is itself one of the largest industries worldwide (WTO 2007). Statistics from 2003 indicate that ecotourism represents roughly 3 percent of the global tourism industry (Fennell 2009:372). Annual revenues have been estimated at \$25 billion (Fennell 2009:372),

while more generous estimates suggest that global ecotourism revenue may exceed \$1 trillion per year (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; Ceballos-Lascurain 1996:46-48).

The popularity of ecotourism is widespread. Since its advent, the industry has been embraced and promoted across the globe (Coria and Calfucura 2012:47; Fennell 2009:373; Kruger 2005:584). Ongoing ecotourism projects can be found on every continent, and these projects introduce tourists into a vast diversity of ecological habitats and environments (Fennell 2009:373; Kruger 2005:584). Although developing countries, particularly within Africa and Central America, are home to the most numerous ecotourism locations (Coria and Calfucura 2012:7; Kruger 2005:584), ecotourism has achieved great popularity within developed nations as well (Fennell 2009:373). It is evident that as an industry, ecotourism has achieved remarkable and widespread success during its relatively short existence.

Current Objectives

Though there is no clear consensus regarding the exact definition of ecotourism (and indeed there may never be), there are clearly many consistencies in its focus. This suggests that, despite the details, there does seem to be some general agreement regarding its underlying philosophy. As indicated by the preceding discussion, the concept of ecotourism is founded in principles of biodiversity conservation and community development. Its primary philosophy follows that ecotourism is intended for the “celebration and protection of the natural environment and of local people” (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:328). Much of the potential attributed to the industry has been predicated on its ability to fulfill these doctrines.

Ultimately, as a tool in conservation, ecotourism aims to protect biodiversity (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Fennell 2009; Kiss 2004; Kruger 2005:580; Jaffe 2006; Russell and Wallace 2004; Scace et al. 1992; Stronza and Gordillo 2008). Specifically, ecotourism contributes

financially to conservation efforts (Fennell 2001:405; Jaffe 2006:218; Scace et al. 1992:11-12; TIES 2012), aids in the protection of local ecology and biodiversity (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; Stronza and Gordillo 2008:449), and increases environmental awareness amongst tourists and local people alike (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; Fennell 2001:404; Scace et al. 1992:12; TIES 2012). Thus the primary objective of ecotourism is ecological “sustainability”, and it strives to minimise the environmental impact of tourist activities (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; Fennell 2001:404; Fennell 2009:373; Stronza and Gordillo 2008:449; TIES 2012). This principle stands in sharp contrast to the mass tourism industry, which has historically been notoriously destructive to the environment (Stronza and Gordillo 2008:448-449).

With respect to the latter half of its doctrine, practitioners of ecotourism often seek to benefit local people and contribute to community development. They aim to foster cross-cultural respect and awareness amongst the ecotourists (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; TIES 2012). Ecotourism aims to actively involve and empower local communities, seeking to garner the interest and participation of the residents (Stem et al. 2003:389; TIES 2012). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, ecotourism has been championed as contributing to local economies, providing both employment and financial revenue for local people (Aylward et al 1996; Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; Fennell 2001:404-405; Kruger 2005:579; Stronza and Gordillo 2009:449; TIES 2012).

Assessing ecotourism

Despite its considerable popularity, many experts have questioned whether ecotourism is truly the positive endeavour it is purported to be, or whether the tenets upon which it was based have been lost in its rapid expansion as a revenue-driven industry (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Jaffe 2006; Kiss 2004; Kruger 2005; Stem et al. 2003; Stronza and Gordillo 2008). Observations

of existing ecotourism cases indicate variable success rates. While some studies illustrate positive environmental impacts of ecotourism, contributing to the conservation and protection of local biodiversity (Jaffe 2006; Kruger 2005), others document increased ecological degradation resulting from the implementation of such projects (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Jaffe 2006; Kruger 2005; Russell and Wallace 2004). Similarly, various ecotourism cases have instigated positive socioeconomic changes to nearby communities (Coria and Calfucura 2012; Kruger 2005; Stronza and Gordillo 2008), but others have conversely inflicted devastating unintended impacts upon local people (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Kiss 2004; Stronza and Gordillo 2008; Wall 1997). It is thus necessary to critically examine both the objectives ecotourism aims to achieve and the manner in which projects pursue these goals, in order to assess its true value as a tool for conservation and community.

Conservation: Objectives

The goals of ecotourism with respect to conservation can be further broken down to specify various avenues by which ecotourism endeavours can benefit the local environment. The first objective of ecotourism is to benefit efforts of biodiversity conservation, though there are a variety of means used to pursue this goal. One of the main tenets of ecotourism is that a proportion of the revenue from these operations is allocated towards conservation efforts (Kruger 2005; Scace et al. 1992; Stem et al. 2003). Portions of the revenue accrued from sources such as park access fees and tour costs may be directly invested in conservation projects surrounding the tourism site (Stem et al. 2003:388). Such funding can then be utilised to financially support the maintenance and enforcement of protected areas (Kruger 2005; Stem et al. 2003). As an industry that generates upwards of \$30 billion annually (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; Kruger 2005:580), ecotourism can be an extremely valuable conservation resource.

Ecotourism objectives for conservation also extend beyond direct financial contributions. Public education, concern, and support have long been considered to be keys to achieving conservation success (Brosius and Russell 2003). With its focus on “natural” landscapes, biodiversity, and the preservation thereof, ecotourism offers a significant potential for educating tourists about conservation. The majority of individuals engaging in ecotourism tend to demonstrate an “environmental ethic” (Kruger 2005:580) and express a general concern for environment (Fennell 2009:374). Studies also indicate that such an “environmental ethic” and conservation awareness may be strengthened following engagement in ecotourism experiences (Kruger 2005:580). By fostering such awareness and concern, ecotourism can generate increased support for conservation amongst those whom engage in it. Upon leaving the tourism locations, ecotourists may further disseminate such knowledge, thus potentially spreading awareness for conservation issues well beyond any specific site (Stem et al. 2003:388). However, these effects have not been widely studied, if at all. The likelihood of tourists truly enacting such changes in their daily lives and practices is not well known.

Conservation can also be aided through the participation of local people in ecotourism operations. Ideally, ecotourism is meant to actively involve members of local communities, offering opportunities for employment and economic gain (Coria and Calfucura 2012; Kruger 2005; Scace et al. 1992:11-12; Stem et al. 2003). These changes can in turn have a great impact on conservation, particularly in areas where local livelihoods had previously been primarily based on resource extraction and consumptive use of the land. Ecotourism may represent new, more reliable, or more lucrative sources of income than previous options, thus providing viable alternatives to environmentally consumptive activities (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Coria and Calfucura 2012; Kruger 2005). Research suggests that when ecotourism projects offer economic

benefits to local people, shifts in local land use may ensue as the need to exploit the land for income purposes is decreased (Coria and Calfucura 2012:53; Kruger 2005:593; Stem et al. 2003:411). Not only does increased economic opportunity reduce the need to exploit land and resources, but this also provides local incentive for sustainable use and protection of land (Coria and Calfucura 2012:57; Scace et al. 1992:11). When ecotourism provides significant income, the degradation and consumption of land in turn greatly decrease its economic value, thus providing persuasive motivation for local people to actively support and engage in conservation at the given location (Coria and Calfucura 2012:57; Kruger 2005:593).

This shifting motivation of local people with respect to conservation is somewhat related to the final role that ecotourism may play in efforts to preserve and protect biodiversity. While generating revenue locally can encourage residents to engage in conservation, projects that achieve more widespread economic impacts can attract the attention of those in positions of power within the field of conservation, such as NGOs, government bodies, and policy makers (Kiss 2004:233; Kruger 2005:579, 593; Russell and Wallace 2004:2). If ecotourism is demonstrated to generate substantial revenue and contribute to economic development, these factors can provide convincing impetus to direct resources towards the protection of the tourism site (Kiss 2004:233; Kruger 2005:593; Scace et al. 1992:11). Consequently, successful ecotourism can encourage administrative bodies to prioritise conservation policies and devote resources toward the management and protection of biodiversity (Kiss 2004:233-234; Kruger 2005:579, 593; Russell and Wallace 2004:2; Scace et al. 1992:11).

Conservation: Realities

The aspirations of ecotourism with respect to conservation are unfortunately not mirrored by the reality of its impacts. Ecotourism has demonstrated considerable potential to harm the

very thing it aims to protect. Though many cases of ecotourism have indeed fulfilled environmental objectives and benefitted conservation efforts (Kruger 2005; Stem et al. 2003), other examples indicate highly detrimental (though perhaps unintended) impacts resulting from ecotourist activities (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Coria and Calfucura 2012; Jaffe 2006; Kruger 2005; Russell and Wallace 2004; Stem et al. 2003).

Several authors point to problems stemming from the very narrow focus of the conservation goals of ecotourism. Those who champion ecotourism as a conservation tool often consider the benefits of such projects on a very site-specific basis, while ignoring the more widespread environmental impacts (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:316; Gössling 1999:316; Russell and Wallace 2004:2). The data suggest that the majority of ecotourists travel by airplane to and from their destinations (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:316; Gössling 1999:316). Carrier and MacLeod point out the considerable environmental effects of such travel, asserting that a standard flight, for a tourist travelling from a Northern hemisphere location to a popular tropical ecotourism destination, emits 650kg of carbon dioxide and utilises more than 200kg of jet fuel (2005:317). Even for shorter journeys than this, the environmental impacts of travel are considerable. According to data from the US Environmental Protection Agency, the average vehicle emits 423g of carbon dioxide per mile travelled (OTAQ 2011:2). A car would thus create, on average, approximately 26 kg of carbon dioxide emissions over a 100km trip. A brief 575km flight from Toronto to New York City may consume between 14kg and 46kg in jet fuel *per passenger*, depending on the aircraft (Gössling 1999:312; IATA 2013). Though ecotourist activities may exert minimal environmental impact, the travel involved in such endeavours has a significant, and oft-ignored, effect. Russell and Wallace pose the following question: “What is the point of an eco-friendly... hotel... if the international tourists visiting it have all come on ten-

hour journeys by ozone-depleting, carbon dioxide-producing jet aircraft?" (2004:2). These arguments suggest the hypocrisy of attaching claims of conservation to any form of long-distance travel and tourism. These global environmental impacts are often neglected, as the success of ecotourism projects is primarily gauged by only its impacts on the local environment (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:317; Gössling 1999:316). To truly measure the value of ecotourism for conservation, researchers must critically assess the environmental impacts on both a local and global scale.

This criticism does not apply to every ecotourism project however. There are many cases in which these broadly dispersed impacts may be outweighed by a project's potential to benefit local conservation (Carrier and MacLeod 317). However, ecotourism still poses possible risks to local ecology. Many experts argue that the human activity associated with ecotourism is inherently disruptive to the environment (Jaffe 2006:218 Kruger 2005:592; Stem et al. 2003:388; Wall 1997:488). The introduction of human activity has inevitable effects on natural habitats and wildlife at a given site, which can range in degree from very minimal disturbance to severe disruption (Kruger 2005:592; Wall 1997:488). The presence of ecotourists into previously undisturbed (or minimally disturbed) areas can increase stress levels in animals, which can in turn alter reproduction, subsistence, and other such behaviours (Jaffe 2006; Stem et al 2003; Wall 1997). Ecotourism can further result in the degradation and erosion of habitats, which can critically upset the ecological balance of a site (Kruger 2005:592). The impacts of ecotourism are highly variable, however, as the degree to which local ecologies are sensitive to such changes is largely site-specific (Jaffe 2006; Kruger 2005; Stem et al. 2003). Thus certain ecosystems may be rather resilient to tourist imposition, while others may be extremely sensitive to even the most minor of disturbances (Kruger 2005:580; Stem et al. 2003:388). This variability suggests that

preliminary research designed to gain a comprehensive understanding of a particular site is a critical component to ecotourism success.

Unfortunately, research prior to enacting tourism projects is consistently sparse, so unanticipated ecological consequences are relatively common (Jaffe 2006; Wall 1997). It has been suggested that every ecosystem can tolerate a particular level of human activity, though there is rarely total agreement surrounding the actual levels of activity any given system can withstand. Ecotourism projects may be unintentionally harmful when the number of tourists surpasses the carrying capacity at a particular site (Jaffe 2006; Kruger 2005:593; Stem et al. 2003). This effect stems partly from the fact that these thresholds vary based on the specificities of each location, making it nearly impossible to measure. Compounding this pragmatic difficulty, however, is that many ecotourism operations lack vigilance in monitoring the number of tourists that they allow, as well as ecological monitoring (Kruger 2005:592; Stem et al. 2003:388). Several authors highlight the issue of carrying capacity as a paradox of ecotourism: “successful ecotourism projects subsequently [may] fall victim to their own success” (Kruger 2005:592). An ecotourism project’s success as an economic venture can ultimately lead to its failure as a conservation mechanism (Kruger 2005; Stem et al. 388).

Community: Objectives

As per its underlying philosophy, ecotourism also strives to create positive impacts for local communities. Like the goals of ecotourism with respect to conservation, an ideal ecotourism operation aims to fulfill a number of objectives in the local community. Primarily, through the involvement and participation of local people, ecotourism projects are intended to provide direct financial benefit for those living in the surrounding areas (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Coria and Calfucura 2012; Kiss 2004; Stem et al. 2003; Stronza and Gordillo 2008; TIES

2012). The manner in which the industry is intended to achieve this aim is twofold: ecotourism activities can generate revenue for local businesses, which contributes to the overall economy, and can also offer a reliable source of employment to local residents (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315; Coria and Calfucura 2012:47; Kiss 2004:232). Ecotourists are likely to support local services, much more so than “regular” tourists (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:315). With a desire to experience culture, tourists may pay fees for tours of nearby communities, eat at local restaurants, and patronise other locally owned businesses. Increasing demand for local services generates increased employment opportunities for residents. Further, the revenue acquired from these establishments is redistributed back into the community, remaining in the local economy, and thus improving the overall economic condition (Coria and Calfucura 2012; Kruger 2005). Ideally then, ecotourism operations increase employment opportunities and generate revenue for local industries, thus initiating economic improvements for local people.

Though less directly measurable, ecotourism is also intended to stimulate positive social impacts and positive perceptions of conservation among the involved communities. Indeed, a study assessing community perceptions of ecotourism revealed that local residents commonly reported experiencing positive social impacts. (Stronza and Gordillo 2008:461). The introduction of ecotourism projects may lead to increased opportunities to attain education and skills that local communities would otherwise not be afforded (Stronza and Gordillo 208:461-462). Additionally, involvement in ecotourism operations can lead to greater cooperation and trust amongst participants, developments that may be advantageous to the goal of empowering local communities (Stronza and Gordillo 2008:461; TIES 2012).

Community: Realities

As is the case with conservation objectives, the true contributions of ecotourism to local communities often fail to live up to its professed goals. While supporters of ecotourism assert that revenues must directly contribute to local economic wellbeing, the reality of many ecotourism projects indicates that economic benefits are variable. In his study of 251 ecotourism case studies, Kruger revealed that 25 percent of these projects failed to contribute any revenue to local communities, but rather merely exploited the land at the exclusion of local people (2005:592). Additional research suggests that ecotourism's financial contributions to local communities may be minimal, with some projects contributing less than 10 percent of their revenues to local communities (Coria and Calfucura 2012:50; Mowforth and Munt 2003:175). In such cases, the economic benefits of ecotourism for local people are negligible, at best (Coria and Calfucura 2012: 50; Kruger 2005:593).

Data further indicates that even when significant revenue is allocated to local economies, the distribution of benefits within the community may be highly unequal (Kruger 2005:592; Wall 1997:489). Economic gain is largely dependent on participation and engagement with ecotourism operations, both of which may be dependent on personal skills and attributes. Several cases demonstrate such bias in the distribution of benefits, illustrating the advantages are realised by a limited portion of a community, namely those exhibiting particular skills such as language, hospitality, and management (Wall 1997:489). Certain segments of a community may be unfairly excluded from involvement in ecotourism operations, thus marginalised from the economic gain experienced by those who are able to participate (Coria and Calfucura 2012: 50; Wall 1997:489).

Further economic impacts on local communities may be constrained as a result of the policies surrounding the land and resources used for ecotourism (Jaffe 2006; Kruger 2005; Wall

1997). Policies are often changed to accommodate ecotourism operations, reflecting the changing use of the land (Stem et al. 2003:489; Wall 1997:489). Such changes often restrict the extraction of resources and other consumptive land uses, and may increase protection of the area to ensure its preservation as a site for tourist activities (Wall 1997:489). These policy changes can have serious consequences for the land's previous users, namely local residents. Restrictions in access to land can eliminate forms of livelihood upon which many local people were dependent, such as resource extraction, hunting, or other such traditional uses of land (Jaffe 2006:219-220; Stem et al. 2003:489-490; Wall 1997:489). Furthermore, there is often little attempt to develop alternatives to replace such losses of livelihood. In one such case in Ghana, the implementation of ecotourism eliminated almost all local uses of the nearby rainforest, on which they relied for both resources and employment, and resulted in a drastic rise in local unemployment, from 3 percent to 27 percent (Jaffe 2006:219-220). Not only do some ecotourism projects fail to actively benefit local economy, but others can cause palpable harm.

Such economic effects cannot be divorced from the social impacts experienced by local residents. Indeed, interviews with members of communities involved in ecotourism indicated that social and economic impacts were rarely experienced in isolation (Stronza and Gordillo 2008:461). As such, it is unsurprising that ecotourism has produced many unintended and unfavourable social and cultural impacts for local people. While ecotourists are apt to contribute to local economies by visiting local establishments and engaging in tours to experience local culture, they often do so with certain expectations and preconceptions (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:317). Often, local people are perceived of as "exotic," and tourists bear some expectation of witnessing "a distinct set of cultural practices, such as styles of clothing, house designs, songs, foods, and artefacts" (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:329). In other words, tourists expect to

experience a culture that is vastly different from their own. Local people may be inclined to fulfill these preconceived notions to satisfy tourists' expectations. As Cohen describes, "colorful' local costumes and customs, rituals and feast, and folk and ethnic arts become touristic services or commodities, as they come to be performed or produced for touristic consumption" (1988:372). Such staged authenticity may increase the popularity of a service or business amongst tourists, thus incurring greater financial gain (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:317; MacCannell 1973). However, this exoticising of indigenous people can clearly be argued to be a form of cultural exploitation and is strongly reminiscent of neocolonialism. Further, the fetishisation and commodification of people and culture stand in direct conflict to ecotourism's purported aim of empowerment.

Additional social transformations may occur when an ecotourism project is introduced into a community. The various changes that may ensue have been shown, in some cases, to gravely disrupt the existing social structure. While some projects have fostered trust and cooperation within communities, others have initiated the reverse effect, damaging an existing sense of social unity (Stronza and Gordillo 2008:462). Additionally, the new sources of income offered by ecotourism opportunities can alter the economic system, an effect that may be compounded when such economic benefits are unevenly distributed. When such changes occur, traditional relationships, social structures, and systems of reciprocity may be irreversibly fractured (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:317; Stronza and Gordillo 2008:461).

Synopsis

The common lack of success in both protectionist and community-based approaches in conservation can be contributed in part to a failure to consider multiple perspectives on the idea of "conservation." Notions of universality and concreteness are commonly accepted as inherent

to ideas such as “nature,” “biodiversity,” and “sustainability,” but upon closer examination it can be seen that such concepts arise from the paradigms specific to a given individual or public. Despite the multiplicity in the understandings of these notions, only particular conceptualisations are common throughout conservation discourse, while alternative views are overlooked. Acknowledgement and incorporation of different perspectives, goals, and values, through the inclusion of diverse publics, may allow future conservation strategies to interweave these perspectives into dominant conservation theory to arrive at more successful outcomes (Escobar 1998; Takacs 1996).

Where other approaches have failed, ecotourism has been highly promoted as the solution to balancing the interests of varied publics in the quest to conserve biodiversity (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Coria and Calfucura 2012; Fennell 2009; Kruger 2005; Stem et al. 2003). However, its achievements have often largely fallen short of its promised benefit. It is rare that an ecotourism operation fully achieves its often-conflicting goals of generating revenue, protecting biodiversity, and benefiting local people. The failure of ecotourism to meet expectations can be attributed in part to an overall lack of research. The great variation in the success of ecotourism indicates that its impacts are highly site-specific. The variable impacts of ecotourism are dictated by the unique make-up of a given site (Kruger 2005), thus no strategy can hope to achieve universal success. There is a critical need to examine communities, environments, and ecosystems in order to gain an understanding of the potential impacts that ecotourists may impose upon the people and biodiversity at a given site.

Further, as ecotourism is a relatively young industry, there has thus far been little consensus as to its specific definition and similarly little guidance to dictate effective strategies for achieving its objectives (Fennell 2001). Such deficiencies manifest in broader problems, as

Fennell argues that, “there has been a critical lack of meaningful policy in ecotourism to guide industry practice” (2009:375). Such policy must be established with the input of all stakeholders, from local people to governments and administrative bodies, if it hopes to be successful (Fennell 2009:375). Without such cooperation, ecotourism is unlikely to curb its current shortcomings, and the current trend of unintended impacts, both on the environment and on the communities it aims to benefit, will persist.

Clearly ecotourism is not panacea that it has historically been purported to be. However, its perceived potential to aid in conservation and benefit local people is not entirely unwarranted. Under ideal circumstances, ecotourism projects have demonstrated the industry’s ability to achieve many of its admirable objectives (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Kruger 2005; Stronza and Gordillo 2008). However, in order to achieve such success, the specificities of each project must be critically examined, and projects must be implemented with the input and active participation of all stakeholders. Employing ecotourism as a blanket solution to conservation is ineffective; its true potential lies in its use as merely one of a selection of tools within the ever-growing conservation toolbox.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Site: Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario

History

In Central Ontario between Georgian Bay to the West and the Ottawa River to the East, where the bustling metropolis of Toronto wanes, the rocky terrain of the Canadian Shield gives way to vast miles of forest, lakes, and rivers. Ontario's "cottage country" region, now known primarily as a place of escape and leisure, has a rich history since its first human occupation nearly 10,000 years ago. Archaeological evidence suggests that the first hunter-gatherers arrived in the area around 7,000 BCE (MacKay 2002:2; Whiteduck 2009:40-41). First Nations peoples, including the Algonquins, the Iroquois, the Hurons, and the Ojibwas, have occupied the region for more than 8,500 years (MacKay 2002:2; Whiteduck 2009:40). In 1613, Samuel de Champlain, a French explorer, and a small group of missionaries became the first Europeans to the region. (Epp 2009:56; MacKay 2002:2; Whiteduck 2009:41,44). The 18th century saw the arrival of Europeans in far greater numbers, setting up fur trade between the Ottawa River and the west, creating permanent settlements, and dividing the land in the process of creating colony boundaries (Epp 2009:56; MacKay 2002:2).

Human activity in the region increased dramatically in the 19th century, with the introduction of logging. In the years leading up to the turn of the century, the British Navy had begun to increase their lumber demands (MacKay 2002:3). Additionally, the early years of the 1800s saw French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte's efforts to cripple the British economy through the introduction of the Continental System, which blocked British access to all European ports and forced trade with the New World (Epp 2009:56). Both of these events forced England to

start acquiring timber from outside of Europe, and the British government began the quest for lumber in British North America (Epp 2009:56; MacKay 2002:3). The forests of (what is now) Central Ontario offered an abundant and rich supply, and the timber trade was active along the Ottawa River within just a few years (MacKay 2002:3).

Logging and lumber trade continued to grow rapidly throughout much the 19th century, so much so that at times more than 50% of healthy Canadian men were seasonally employed at logging camps (Strickland 2008:1). While the booming trade offered employment and contributed greatly to the economy, the extent of logging activity had begun to take its toll on the forests by the latter half of the century (Epp 2009:56, 68). By the 1880s, many Canadians, recognising the rate at which the forests were being depleted, had begun to develop a newfound appreciation and concern for the surrounding forests (Duffy 2002:71; Epp 2009:68). A growing desire to protect such natural resources from total depletion coincided with the early days of wilderness tourism as Niagara Falls, the upper Great Lakes, and the Muskoka region had begun to attract the interest of visitors seeking to engage with “nature” (Epp 2009:69); it was in this atmosphere that plans for a provincial park began to unfold.

In 1885, the idea of creating a provincial park in Ontario was proposed by Alexander Kirkwood with the intention of protecting the forests and the wildlife within them. (Duffy 2002:73; Epp 2009:72; MacKay 2009:8). In a letter to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Kirkwood advocated for the creation of a protected area “principally for the preservation and maintenance of the natural forest... wherein it shall be unlawful for any person to enter and cut timber for any private use, or disturb or destroy the fur-bearing animals” (Kirkwood 1886:3-4). He proposed the name Algonquin (Algonkin) in order to “perpetuate the name of one of the greatest Indian nations that has inhabited the North American continent” (Kirkwood 1886:8; see

also Duffy 2002:74; Epp 2009:73; MacKay 2002:10). Around the same time, James Dickson, Ontario's Provincial Land Surveyor, began a yearlong survey of the land, investigating the potential for a park (MacKay 2002:8). It was not until 1892, however, that these plans began to come to fruition, when the newly appointed Royal Commission began discussions about the feasibility and potential benefits of establishing such a park (Ontario Parks 1998:1; Epp 2009:73-74; MacKay 2002:9). The Commission submitted the ensuing report the following year, and the park was created with the passing of the *Algonquin National Park Act* in May 1893 (Ontario Parks 1998:1; Epp 2009:74; MacKay 2002:9).

Algonquin National Park was established as the first provincial park in Ontario (though the original name implies a designation as a national park, it has always been a provincial park), encompassing 18 townships over an area of 3,797 square kilometres (Ontario Parks 1998:1; Friends of Algonquin [FOA] 2013). The *Act* outlined six functions the park was intended to serve: to maintain major water systems, to conserve the forest, to protect wildlife, to provide a region for regulated logging, to act as "a place of health resort", and to benefit the climate in the surrounding areas (Ontario Parks 1998:1; Epp 2009:73; FOA 2013; MacKay 2002:9-10). In 1913 the name of the park was changed, from Algonquin National Park to Algonquin Provincial Park, as it is known today (Ontario Parks 1998:1; FOA 2013; MacKay 2002:13).

Algonquin Park Today

Since its establishment, the park has been steadily evolving. There have been eight amendments made to expand its boundaries and, at 7,630 square kilometres, the current park is nearly double its original area (Ontario Parks 1998:1; Baker 2002:198; FOA 2013; Rimmel 2009:14; Tozer 2011:1). In 1974, following consideration and discussion about park policies, the first *Algonquin Park Master Plan* was published; it has since been revised numerous times, with

its most recent full publication in 1998 and amendments in 2013 (Ontario Parks 2013b; FOA 2013; MacKay 2002). The current edition of the plan outlines five objectives that the park aims to fulfill: to protect natural and cultural resources, to provide recreational opportunities, to highlight natural and cultural heritage, to provide tourism opportunities, and to practise sustainable resource management and contribute economically to local communities (Ontario Parks 1998:7-9; FOA 2013; MacKay 2002:21). The management plan also outlines the division of the park into seven zoning categories, each permitting different types of activity and use: nature reserve, wilderness, natural environment, historic, development, access, and recreation/utilisation (Ontario Parks 1998:13; Ontario Parks 2013b:5; Baker 2002:202; Eagles and Bando 2009:111). Zoning allows for the management and regulation of activity within the park, in an effort to fulfill the general objectives of conservation, resource management/economic contribution, and recreation.

Conservation in the Park

Biodiversity protection and conservation has been an important goal of Algonquin Park since its foundation. Even at the peak of the timber trade in the 19th century, people recognised the value of the region's flora and fauna (Duffy 2002:71; Epp 2009:68). The park's landscape is distinctive in that it transitions between deciduous and coniferous forests (Friends of Algonquin 2013; Quinn 2009:220; Strickland 2006:3; Strickland and Rutter 2002:3; Tozer 2011:1) and encompasses nearly 2,500 lakes, ponds, and rivers (Mandrak and Crossman 2003:2; Rimmel 2009:14). It contains an extensive diversity of species and supports five major types of faunal habitat within its perimeters (Friends of Algonquin 2013; Strickland 2006:3; Strickland and Rutter 2002:3; Tozer 2011:1). A conservative estimates suggests that there are as many as 10,000 different species contained within the boundaries of the park, though it is likely many more

undocumented species exist (see Brooks et al. 2003; Crins et al. 1998; Dickson and Crins 1993; FOA 2005; FOA 2013; Jones 2003; Mandrak and Crossman 2003; Marshall 1997; Strickland 2006; Strickland and Rutter 2002; Thorn 2006; Tozer 2011).

The development and human settlement that has inundated Southern Ontario throughout the last two hundred years has encroached the ranges of many species and destroyed vast areas of habitat (Brooks et al. 2003:5). Throughout its history, Algonquin Park has aimed to protect the biodiversity within its boundaries from further human disturbance (Ontario Parks 1998:7; Brooks et al. 2003:5; FOA 2013; MacKay 2002:9-10; Strickland and Rutter 2002:5). Four of the zone categories (nature reserve, natural environment, wilderness, and historic zones), comprising a combined 31.6% of the total park area are deemed to be “protective zones”, permitting only limited, low-intensity activities to varying degrees (Ontario Parks. 2013b:13, 18-20). Although the park is home to relatively few species currently considered to be at risk (sixteen currently classified as Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern) (Cumming 2009:50-56), the populations and habitats contained within the park, and within these three zones in particular, are of great significance to the continuation and wellbeing of all species. Since the early days of the park, its role in conservation and the protection of species has become increasingly paramount.

Logging in the Park

Though the establishment of the park was partially in response to the growing concern over the destruction caused by the unregulated logging and timber trade, the aim of the Park was *not* to prevent logging in the area (MacKay 2002:9; Strickland 2006:30). Rather, part of the motivation behind the creation of the park was the prospect of upholding the future of the region’s logging industry (Baker 2002:201; Duffy 2002:75; Strickland 2003:30). Regulations and permissions have been revised numerous times, but logging has been permitted within

Algonquin Park for the entirety of its history (see MacKay 2002; Strickland 2008; Williams 2009). In fact, the park is unique in that it is the only provincial park in Ontario in which commercial logging is permitted (Eagles and Bandoh 2009:111). Although logging is uncommon amongst provincial parks, within Algonquin it is surprisingly widespread. The Recreation-Utilisation zone, the only zone in which resource activities (logging, hunting and trapping) are permitted, comprises 65.3% of the park's total area (Ontario Parks 2013b:5,23).

Despite the fact that the majority of the park's area is available for logging, many authors suggest that the general public seems to be relatively unaware of the logging activity that occurs in Algonquin (Baker 2002:200-202; Quinn 2009:221-222). This is no coincidence; logging activities and visitor accessibility are carefully managed, and the park is set up so that these activities are kept largely segregated (Ontario Parks 1998:23; Baker 2002:200). Hiking, canoeing, and portaging routes never intersect with logging roads or areas (Baker 2002:200). Baker (2002:200) points out that pamphlets used by visitors make no mention of logging activities or even the system of logging roads that meander over 2,000km within park boundaries. Eagles and Bandoh reveal that, since it is park employees who oversee the Algonquin Forestry Authority, "money paid by visitors... is used to manage logging activity in the park" (2009:119), yet few visitors are cognizant of this fact. Though the lack of public awareness of the park's relationship with the logging industry is somewhat unsettling, this relationship itself should not be discredited. Logging was, and continues to be, a critical component of the local economy, and the park has played a significant role in its continued success (Strickland 2006:3). Careful management of the park has enabled a successful coexistence between logging activities and the recreational activities of park tourists.

Tourism in the Park

Of course, while Algonquin Park plays critical roles in both conservation and the logging industry, to most of the general public it is valued primarily as a tourist and recreation destination. Its location in Central Ontario is “accessible from large urban centres and convenient to most tourism travel routes across Ontario” (FOA 2013); its vast area provides a venue for a wide array of tourist activities; and its reputation within and beyond Ontario attracts visitors through word-of-mouth (IPSOS 2012a:28, 2012b:30, 2012c:5). The Friends of Algonquin website (2013) suggests that the park has over half a million visitors each year. But that number may be much higher, as statistics taken in 2011 indicate that Algonquin received 818,696 that year (MNR 2012:58). Though the majority of tourists visit the park from elsewhere in Ontario, the park also attracts many visitors from other provinces and countries (IPSOS 2012a:15, 2012b:15, 2012c:5; MNR 2012:58).

Tourists to Algonquin have two primary options from which to choose: the Interior, which offers over 1,900 undeveloped campsites accessible by hiking, canoeing, and portaging; or the Corridor (Figure 3.1), the 56km stretch of Hwy 60 scattered with walking trails and interpretive facilities, which offers nine developed campgrounds with nearly 1,300 campsites (Baker 2002:203-204; FOA 2013; MNR 2012:10). Algonquin’s Interior offers visitors a network of canoe routes spanning a total distance of over 2,000km, as well as a myriad of portaging and hiking trails (Baker 2002:199; FOA 2013). The Interior can be accessed by any of the 29 access points along the park’s perimeter, each of which are regulated to control the number of visitors in the Interior at a given time (Ontario Parks 1998:22; Baker 2002:200). Due to the low impact nature of activities such as backpacking, portaging, and canoeing, backcountry activities and camping are permitted in areas within all seven zone types in Algonquin (Ontario Parks 1998:13-

23). In contrast to the ruggedness of the Interior, the Corridor is the most developed area of the park and contains park offices and outfitters, facilities such as the Visitor Centre and Logging Museum, and interpretive trails. Between the two areas, visitors may engage in activities such as camping, hiking, canoeing, fishing, swimming, skiing, cycling, wildlife watching, educational programs, and many other outdoor activities all year-round.

Research Process and Methods

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of individuals involved, in various manners, in ecotourism in Algonquin Park. I conducted research over a four-month period, beginning in June 2013 and concluding with the final interviews in September 2013. During this period, I interviewed a total of 34 participants comprising visitors to the park and residents living in the vicinity of the park. The Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo and the Ministry of Natural Resources in Ontario approved the research protocol.

The Beginning: Research Authorisation and Obstacles

Though I began to conduct research in and around the park in June 2013, the research process began in March 2013, with the application to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) for the required permission to conduct research within the boundaries of Algonquin Park. This process was a lengthy one. The application specifies that it “usually requires a period of up to two months for review and approval” (MNR permit application form, available at <http://www.ontarioparks.com/email/research>), and a confirmation email sent to me reiterates that “reviews may take up to 60 days to complete” (personal communication, MNR official). My permit, however, was not granted authorisation until June 21, 2013 (after some prodding on my behalf), 94 days after the application was submitted.

Further, although officially, “[t]he MNR welcomes research in parks and protected areas” (MNR 2013), the response to my proposed research was less than welcoming, as I was met with unexpected resistance. Although my study was ultimately granted authorisation, the conditions imposed on my permit restricted me in a number of ways. I was excluded from recruiting tourist participants in many areas within the park boundaries; recruitment was only permitted in the most public areas of the park, such as the Visitor Centre and the entrance gates. Two key recruitment methods that I had originally planned to employ, posting informational posters and systematically recruiting participants at campgrounds, were disallowed.

In addition, I was ultimately prevented from interviewing the third group of participants that I had intended to include in my study: employees of Algonquin Park. Although the conditions of my research permit approved me to conduct interviews with employees as coordinated by a supervisor within the park, these interviews did not come to fruition. I was informed by my contact in the park that they did not think there were many employees who would qualify as appropriate participants for my study. Further attempts to discuss this or coordinate meetings received no reply. Consequently, I was unable to conduct interviews with any park employees.

Participants

Upon receiving my research permit, I began to recruit participants and engage in interviews. For this process, I employed the method of purposive sampling, selecting participants to represent each of the two categories: individuals living near the park and visitors to the park. For the former, I primarily sought out owners and employees of businesses along Highway 60, between Huntsville and Barry’s Bay (Figure 3.1). Initially, I approached prospective participants in person in local businesses. As this method involved a great deal of travel between locations

and proved to be time consuming (and not overly successful), I later began a process of email recruitment as well, emailing businesses along Highway 60 as well as Highways 11 and 17 to engage additional participants. Ultimately, 13 local residents participated in my study, 11 from towns along Highway 60 and two from towns located off of Highway 11 (Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1).

To recruit tourist participants, my original intent was to conduct a systematic sampling of day use visitors and campers at the developed campgrounds within the park. However, as per the conditions of my research permit, I was prohibited from approaching visitors at these campgrounds. I thus limited my search for participants to three main locations within the park: the Visitor Centre, the West Gate, and the East Gate. Twelve participants were recruited at these locations, and I conducted interviews with an additional nine informants from locations outside of the park. These nine participants were individuals who were visiting Algonquin Park, but at the time of the interview were frequenting locations external to the park boundaries, including hostels on either side of Highway 60 and a restaurant on the West side of the park. In total, twenty-one tourist participants were included in the study (see Table 3.2).

Interviews and Surveys

To gather data for this qualitative study, I conducted one-on-one interviews or surveys with my participants. Willing participants engaged in full interviews, ranging from 45 minutes to 105 minutes in length, while participants with greater time constraints participated in shorter surveys, from 10 to 20 minutes in length. A total of 13 informants (seven residents and six tourists) participated in longer interviews, while the remaining 21 (six residents and fifteen tourists) engaged in surveys. All but two of the interviews and surveys were conducted in-

person; the remaining two were performed over the telephone and via Skype. With the permission of my participants, I recorded interviews and surveys on a digital recording device.

Interviews were set up in a semi-structured and open-ended format, consisting of a variety of questions intended to gauge perspectives on each of the three main themes: conceptualisations of key ideas, knowledge of the park, and perspectives of the impacts of ecotourism. While the questions asked of tourists and residents were predominantly alike, there was a small subset of questions that were specific to each group (for a full list of interview questions, see Appendices A and B). Occasionally new questions emerged through conversations with participants (as noted in Appendices A and B), and interviews evolved somewhat to include these topics. These changes were generally minor, and interview questions remained largely consistent for all participants.

Surveys were similarly constructed to gain an understanding of the three research themes, though they investigated these subjects in a less detailed manner than did full interviews. Surveys were composed of select questions from the longer interviews. Though they lacked the degree of detail that emerged from full interviews, survey questions accessed the fundamental components of each theme (for a full list of survey questions, see Appendices C and D). Similar to interviews, survey questions were largely analogous between residents and tourists, but a subset of questions was specific to each group.

Analysis

Upon completion of the interview process, I created written transcripts for most of the recorded interviews and surveys. I then employed a content analysis approach to examine the data, which began with a process of thoroughly re-reading transcripts and re-listening to recordings. This was a critical first step, prior to exploring specific questions and topics

individually, in order to gain a deeper familiarity with each participant's responses in their entirety (see Briggs 1986:4).

Having considered the data more generally, I then sought to analyse individual topics within the interviews. I deconstructed each interview and survey to arrange the data according to specific questions. This rearrangement served as a means of analysing interview topics independently and enabling the comparison of analogous data from each participant. Subsequently, I explored the body of responses to each question, to discern key ideas that were expressed by each participant and compare these ideas to one another. In this last step, I aimed to fulfill the principal tenets of a content analysis approach, to “[make] inferences systematically and... [identify] special characteristics of a message” (Holsti 1968:608) in order to “understand better the perspective of the producer of these words” (Berg 2001:242). As such, I explicitly examined those aspects of my data that were directly stated by participants.

In addition to a consideration for that which was blatant and definable within the interviews, my analysis engaged with the latent content as well. When reading and listening to interviews in full, I evaluated not only spoken words, but also the underlying tones and attitudes of the participants. Additionally, I consistently referenced field-notes, which were written to account for non-verbal aspects of the interviews, to supplement recordings and transcripts. Through these measures, I incorporated an analysis of the latent content of the data (see Berg 2001:242-243; Bernard 2011:443-445). These aspects are discussed more thoroughly in the final chapter of this thesis.

Finally, I sought to expand my analysis beyond an examination exclusively of interviews and surveys. Berg (2001:259) asserts that a primary weakness of content analysis is that it has application within a very limited body of data – namely, with respect to this research, the data

gleaned from interview and survey responses. In an effort to counteract this limitation, I additionally studied alternate sources of information about the research site and subject matter. Specifically, I observed and examined many resources within the park, such as the Visitor Centre and the two museums, and analysed publications related to the park, such as informational brochures and websites, to gain an in-depth familiarity with the site itself. Additionally, I was frequently observed visitors and visitor behaviour within the park, to gain insight into the nature of tourist engagement with the park, its facilities, and its wildlife. These factors served to significantly supplement interview data, allowing me to better contextualise the responses of my participants and ultimately providing a basis of comparison between participants' perspectives and other sources of information.

Presentation of Findings

It is clearly impossible to include the entire body of data that was acquired through these interviews. Thus this work, as all academic works inevitably are, is a representation of these data. As this representative nature is an inherent characteristic of all such work, all researchers must compress the entirety of their data into brief and manageable representations of a greater truth (Briggs 1986:54-56). I, as the researcher, am placed in “the position of final arbiter of what is ‘correct’ and ‘objective’” (Briggs 1986:22) within the responses given by participants.

In that role I have engaged close and meticulous analysis of the data, and have discerned themes that I believe accurately characterise the essence of my participants' responses, perspectives, and knowledge. I determined main themes primarily through an immersion with the interview data, identifying key ideas that stood out as being of importance to participants. Further, I approached the data with both a deep familiarity of the academic literature behind the subject matter and personal lived experiences of engaging in ecotourism and conservation. I

thusly connected themes and ideas from the data with a broader theoretical framework. In presenting and illuminating these findings throughout this thesis, I have selected a series of quotations that best embody these themes and ideas.

Methodological Limitations

This project is primarily a survey-based study, as the majority of the data was garnered through interviews and surveys with participants. As such, there are notable limitations to the information that can be garnered from these methods and the conclusions that can be drawn from the data (Briggs 1986). These limitations must not be discounted, in order to ascertain a full understanding of the findings and implications of this project.

Firstly, the use of the interview as a main research tool unavoidably produces a distinct type of data, which must be structured to fit with the interview format (Briggs 1986:23,118). Perspectives and knowledge must be expressed as responses to direct questions, and are consequently “often the product of a carefully monitored kind of presentation” (Cicourel 1974:88; see also Briggs 1986:25). Further, interviews limit responses to those that can be expressed verbally (Briggs 1986:44). The use of and reference to field-notes, written to acknowledge and record non-verbal elements of the interview, helped to minimise this issue, but this does not negate that the data is primarily that which can be expressed through verbal communication and is structured to fit a specific form (Briggs 1986:118).

Similarly, the subject matter discerned from interviews is also of a particular form. As the researcher, I determined the topics that were discussed with participants and were under scrutiny in this research. That is, the questions I chose to ask in the interviews dictated the subject matter that would be under examination throughout this project. Constructed in this manner, the interview process allows for little flexibility in the scope of the subject matter and restricts

discussion with participants to a relatively consistent list of topics and questions (see Briggs 1986:2-3). It must thusly be acknowledged that these questions inevitably arose from my own paradigms and knowledge base, which shaped the nature of the data collected in this project. These paradigms likely share similarities with those of the participants, deviating little from a largely Western framework and point of view.

Furthermore, it is of relevance that data collection for the project, through interviews and surveys, took place in very specific (and structured) contexts (Briggs 1986:16). Responses must be considered within these contextual settings, both the specific context of the interview as a formal and structured mode of communication, and the broader contexts in which my participants were situated, as tourists on a nature-based holiday and residents living in the vicinity of a major provincial park. Both such contexts have implications, to some degree, on the nature of their responses to interview questions.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Briggs describes that, “interview data are indeed decontextualized with respect to the social behaviour they describe” (1986:118). This points to the need for further research to advance the findings of this project, to understand how verbally expressed perceptions, as are described in the following chapters, are related to and enacted in lived experience. Participant-observation was included as a method in this project, as it was not possible due to various constraints affecting the research process. However, I capitalised on other available sources of data (such as park facilities, publications, and observation of visitor engagement with the park, as described previously) to supplement the types of data garnered in such a survey-based study. The analysis of additional materials helped to situate interview data in a broader contextual setting and provide one means of comparison between interview data and

non-interview data. This project thus stands as the first step in garnering an understanding of these subjects, setting the stage for future study into the behavioural implications of its findings.

Table 3.1 – Resident Demographics

	Gender	Location	Age
Participant 1	Male	Barry’s Bay	42
Participant 2	Male	Madawaska	41
Participant 3	Male	Whitney	53
Participant 4	Female	Algonquin Highlands	49
Participant 5	Female	Algonquin Highlands	33
Participant 6	Female	Dwight	39
Participant 7	Male	Dwight	34
Participant 8	Male	Dwight	49
Participant 9	Female	Huntsville	31
Participant 10	Male	Huntsville	29
Participant 11	Female	Huntsville	50
Participant 12	Female	South River	61
Participant 13	Female	Burke’s Falls	33

Table 3.2 – Tourist Demographics

	Gender	Place of Residence	Location of Interview	Age
Participant 1	Female	Toronto, ON	West Gate	54
Participant 2	Female	Toronto, ON	Visitor Centre	26
Participant 3	Female	Toronto, ON	Hostel, west side of the park	36
Participant 4	Female	Toronto, ON	Visitor Centre	48
Participant 5	Male	Toronto, ON	West Gate	33
Participant 6	Male	Toronto, ON	Hostel, west side of the park	
Participant 7	Male	Toronto, ON	Restaurant, east side of the park	40
Participant 8	Male	Richmond Hill, ON	West Gate	25
Participant 9	Female	Kingston, ON	Visitor Centre	26
Participant 10	Female	Ottawa, ON	Hostel, west side of the park	22
Participant 11	Male	Ottawa, ON	East Gate	48
Participant 12	Female	Kitchener, ON	West Gate	25
Participant 13	Male	Kitchener, ON	Visitor Centre	23
Participant 14	Female	Ancaster, ON	West Gate	41
Participant 15	Female	Peterborough, ON	Visitor Centre	55
Participant 16	Male	Ajax, ON	West Gate	27
Participant 17	Female	Orillia, ON	Hostel, west side of the park	51
Participant 18	Female	Red Deer, AB	Hostel, west side of the park	24
Participant 19	Male	New York, USA	West Gate	45
Participant 20	Male	California, USA	Hostel, west side of the park	23
Participant 21	Female	Limerick, Ireland	Hostel, west side of the park	29

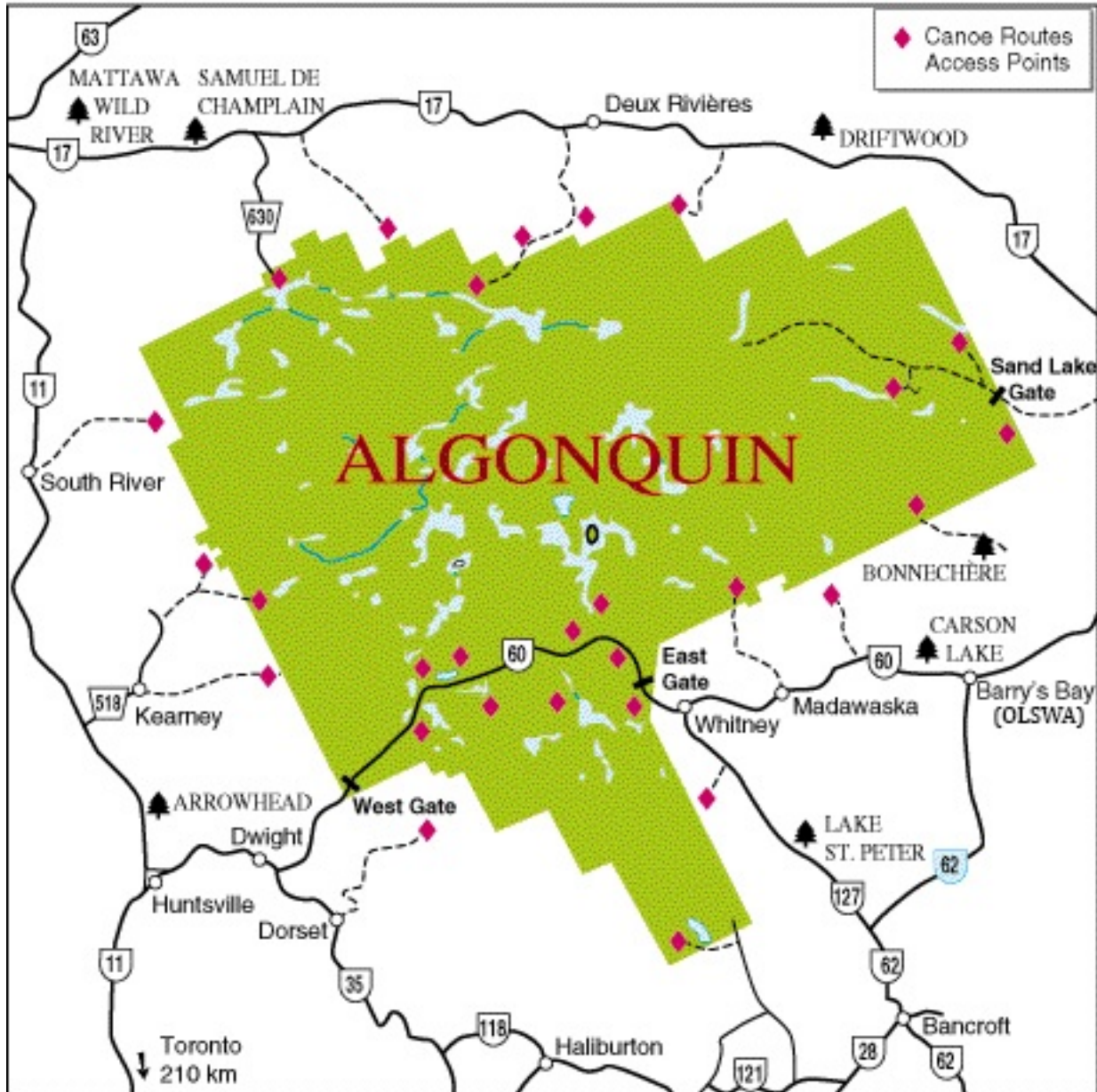


Figure 3.1 – Map of Algonquin Park and surrounding area

Source:

Our Lady Seat of Wisdom website

<http://www.seatofwisdom.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Algonquin-Park-map.jpg>

Chapter 4: Results – Conceptual Perspectives

This chapter describes participants' responses to questions regarding some fundamental concepts in the conservation discourse, investigating the manner in which these concepts were defined and understood. I present and analyse the responses given by participants, discerning trends (or lack thereof) amongst the responses and providing a comparison of the two groups of informants – tourists and residents.

Concepts and Definitions

As demonstrated by the review of the literature exploring conservation theory, difficulties arise in defining many key concepts within the conservation discourse. While the body of literature exploring these concepts is vast, it is largely focused on academic and expert perspectives, garnering definitions and discussions from experts in environmental and related fields, but seldom investigating the perspectives of non-expert publics. As part of my research, I sought to examine the manner in which my informants conceptualised these ideas. As part of each interview and survey, I asked participants to define four such terms. “Nature,” “biodiversity,” and “sustainability” were addressed as they are all rather pervasive terms in conservation discourse. The concept of “ecotourism,” though not as critical a term in conservation as the previous three, also has no unanimous definition, and was addressed due to its importance as the key focus of this study.

Nature

Providing the four definitions proved to be the most challenging section of the interview for most participants, and the question of how to define nature was, for many, the most troublesome. When asked this question, the majority of participants expressed consternation at

the prospect of defining so vague a term as “nature.” One participant was initially hesitant to offer any definition, explaining:

“How would I define nature? That’s like trying to define culture. That was one of my questions, how would I define culture? Well, what is culture? What is nature? ... It depends on the perspective of the person, right?”
(Female resident, Algonquin Highlands)

Another participant burst into laughter before jokingly commenting:

“Wow. I love your questions! I’m on holiday here!... it’s, uh, you know, it’s the wildlife, the animals, the tress, the vegetation, the water, the fish.”
(Female tourist, Ancaster)

Twenty-three participants insinuated the difficulty of this question through initial reactions (such as one tourist who immediately exclaimed, “Oh *please!*”), hesitating to answer, or openly backtracking and questioning their own responses. However, all participants did ultimately compose their own definitions of “nature”.

The participants’ responses suggested significant variability in the manner in which this concept is perceived. In line with the literature, the main point of disparity was regarding the inclusion or exclusion of humanity from respondents’ conceptualisations of “nature”. Of the thirty-two participants who answered this question, nearly half (three residents and twelve tourists) specifically separated humans out of their idea of “nature”. For example:

“I would say nature is pretty much the world without man. That’s my definition. Kind of no industry and settlements, and untouched, so to speak, by any humans. Even though we are part of nature, but we also destroy shit. In my opinion, nature is without humans.”
(Female tourist, Kingston)

Conversely, fewer than one quarter (three residents and four tourists) of informants stated definitively that humans were included in their definition of nature. One tourist, upon contemplating the question, offered one such definition:

“If you were to make me define it, I would say everything’s natural, even chemicals and all that stuff. So in conversation I would never define it that way, but if you were to ask what I really think is a natural phenomenon, I think we are. Therefore, we’re part of nature and everything we make is part of nature, just like beaver dams are part of nature or nests are part of nature.”

(Male tourist, Kitchener)

Another tourist, defined nature in a similar manner, stating:

“It’s everywhere isn’t it? It’s everything.”

(Male, tourist, Ajax)

When asked what he meant by “everything” and whether it included humans, he explained:

“Yeah. Everything is natural, nothing is unnatural.”

(Male tourist, Ajax)

Most of these participants merely stated that the category of nature encompassed humankind, offering little specificity about the extent of this inclusion.

The remaining ten participants (three tourists and seven residents) did not unequivocally include or exclude humans from their definition, but rather expressed hesitation over the degree to which they thought humanity ought to be considered part of “nature.” All of these respondents included humans themselves in their definitions, but indicated that parts of human material culture or technology could not be similarly classified:

“I think nature is everything from the environment to the beings that live in it to the rocks and water and dirt, right? ... I guess the division is somewhere in the material world. Like, I don’t think cars qualify, even if they are there, a part of the environment or something. But where do you draw the line? I guess I can tell you what I do consider to be nature and what I don’t consider to be nature, but I’m not sure where that line is... I would say humans are definitely part of nature, but like I said, I don’t know where the line is. Maybe humans, but none of our stuff? Material culture and the like?”

(Female resident, Huntsville)

When defining “nature”, residents spoke in a more nuanced, less committed tone, while tourists were comparatively unequivocal in their responses. Residents expressed less conviction

about the human-nature relationship; over half of the resident participants neither explicitly included nor excluded humans from their conceptualisations of nature. The majority of tourist participants, on the other hand, viewed humans as distinctly separate from nature in their definition. For many tourists, “nature” was a distinct entity, and one that exists in opposition to humankind.

Biodiversity

The question of defining “biodiversity” similarly garnered a wide range of responses from participants. The participants’ reactions, however, differed from those given from participants defining “nature”. Although the majority of participants expressed uncertainty when questioned about “nature”, all of them ultimately offered a definition. In the case of “biodiversity”, only a few participants initially conveyed confusion or hesitation and many were more confident in their understanding. Yet, six participants (two residents and four tourists) were unable to provide any answer at all.

“I don’t know. I don’t have a definition for this one.”

(Male tourist, New York)

“I don’t know how I’d define biodiversity; that’s a tough one... Most of [the terms] I sort of have a grasp on, and I can sort of wing it, but on that one, it’s sort of like... it’s a matter of conception. And everyone’s conception can be different. Like, there is no truth, there’s only perception. That’s the bottom line.”

(Female resident, Dwight)

Interestingly, however, twelve other participants openly expressed confidence in their answers. These responses often utilised terms such as “definitely” or “obviously”, implying that respondents felt that they could easily provide an accurate definition of biodiversity. One participant wanted me to clarify the question, thinking that the question alone was too simple to

be of relevance:

“I obviously know what it is. But you’re expecting more or less?... Just define the term itself?... It’s just the range of biological life in an area.”

(Male resident, Dwight)

Despite the high level of assurance of many participants, the definitions of “biodiversity” still varied amongst respondents, similar to those cited by experts (Takacs 1996:46-49, see Chapter 2):

“A whole bunch of living things in a small area, working together, a wide variety of them. A lot of different living things.”

(Female tourist, Parry’s Sound)

“Diversity usually just means how many different types of things. And not just different types, but how far stretching, from insects to birds, not just how many different birds there are. So biodiversity’s probably just all the different branches of all life in the world.”

(Male tourist, California)

“I would say if nature includes almost everything – plants, animals, rocks, and so on and so forth – if nature is everything, then subtract out the non-living things. That’s biodiversity. It’s all the living parts of nature.”

(Male resident, Whitney)

“Biodiversity is a system, a system of life. All the different life forms that exist in a system and balance each other. I mean, everything is part of a system, and biodiversity is all of these different parts... A life system in a region.”

(Female resident, Huntsville)

To residents, “biodiversity” was seen a more distinctive, objective concept than “nature”, while the opposite seemed true for tourists. While both groups viewed biodiversity in a similarly varied manner, they differed in terms of the scale to which they conceptualised it. Tourists were somewhat more likely to view “biodiversity” on a global or generalised scale, while more than half of the residents suggested that “biodiversity” was specific to a limited area or region.

Sustainability

On the subject of sustainability, interview responses were relatively consistent with the literature. As described in Chapter 2, the most simplistic definition of the term would be “the ability to maintain something undiminished over some time period” (Lélé and Norgaard 1996:355). Seven participants offered definitions very much in line with this most basic example:

“It’s something that lasts forever. Nothing lasts forever but, you know, let’s drag it out as far as possible.”

(Male tourist, Richmond Hill)

“Something you can maintain for a long time. That’s it. Short, simple, and to the point.”

(Female tourist, Ottawa)

Of the participants whose definitions added “specific connotations and nuances” (Lélé and Norgaard 1996:355) to expand on the rudimentary description, fifteen demonstrated the definitional difficulty described by Costanza and Patten (1995:194, see Chapter 2). These responses offered examples of behaviours or states of mind that they thought contributed to sustainability but fell short of providing any concrete definition.

“I think for something to be sustainable, we have to be more conscious. That’s not really a definition, but let’s use that word. Conscious and aware and informed of the impact you’re having on things.”

(Male tourist, Toronto)

“Taking care of yourself with as little outside purchases as you can get away with.”

(Female resident Dwight)

All of the responses that utilised descriptions and examples in lieu of definitions were related to *environmental* sustainability. Of the remaining eleven definitions, five referred to sustainability in a strictly environmental context. Only six participants in the study indicated that

the term could apply in a multiplicity of contexts, acknowledging that context would affect the definition.

“With respect to ecology? Or commerce? Or what? Because, well, that’s the thing.”

(Male resident, Dwight)

“I’m not sure you can [define sustainability]. At least not without context.”

(Female resident, Huntsville)

Interestingly, it was only resident interviewees who brought up the question of context. Tourist participants either defined it in a simple manner or assumed an environmental context. This could possibly be a result of their position at the time of the interview, rather than a real difference in conceptualisation. Their role as ecotourists spending time within the park and experiencing “nature” may have added to a mindset with a more environmental emphasis. Conversely, resident participants were more likely to be engaged in the economisation of “nature” or conservation. Residents were thus not specifically steeped in an environmental holiday, and instead were meshed more in the other facets of their lives. This would likely contribute to a mindset with a lesser focus on strictly environmental topics, causing residents to consider multiple contexts, such as economic or social sustainability.

Ecotourism

The final definitional question queried about the term “ecotourism”. In defining “ecotourism”, all thirty-three responses discussed the relationship between tourism and the environment. Seventeen participants (nine residents and eight tourists) stated that they saw ecotourism as tourism wherein the primary focus was on seeing and experiencing nature. These definitions emphasised the benefit and enjoyment of the tourist, while benefit to the environment (if any) was secondary.

“I would define that as people wanting to experience nature... People wanting and looking for that untouched world and the biodiversity that goes with it, as a vacation and whatnot.”

(Female tourist, Toronto)

“It’s when the focus is on nature. Rather than, say, taking your kids to Disneyland or going to Paris, for example. It’s about nature. Hopefully people will learn something as well. Learn about something or learn to appreciate what they’re seeing. But yeah, ecotourism would focus on nature, at least in some way.”

(Female resident, Huntsville)

Other participants (seven residents and thirteen tourists) looked at the nature-tourism relationship from a somewhat different perspective, indicating that they defined ecotourism as environmentally responsible tourism. These definitions stressed that ecotourism was intended to cause as low an impact as possible on the environment in which it occurs.

“I guess it’s tourism with the least negative impact on the environment. Is that right?”

(Male tourist, Ajax)

“Well, I guess a low impact use of space. But the lowest possible ecological impact on a given space.”

(Male resident, Dwight)

These definitions, tourism in nature and environmental responsibility, were not mutually exclusive as four participants expressed both of these considerations in their definitions. For example:

“Eco-friendly tourism? But more than that I guess also. Tourism in nature that is also environmentally-friendly and sustainable probably.”

(Female resident, South River)

While the majority of participants had relatively straightforward understandings of ecotourism, a small number noted the problematic nature of this term, noting key difficulties in trying to establish an undisputed definition.

“I think there’s different types of ecotourism... there doesn’t seem to be [a unanimous definition], does there? ... It’s sort of like, argh! Because, what does that mean? I don’t know. Let’s say it’s trendy.”

(Male tourist, Ottawa)

Discussing some such difficulties, one resident offered a different assessment of the current state of ecotourism:

“Ecotourism is whatever the person who’s trying to market what they’re doing defines it as. That would be my definition of ecotourism... It’s like ‘organic’. Don’t even get me started on that. They’ve killed it, they’ve killed the term. They’ve killed the term ecotourism. Everybody’s ecotourism. You’re ecotourism, I’m ecotourism.”

(Female resident, Algonquin Highlands)

Even among the participants that were cognizant of the potential problems surrounding the notion of “ecotourism”, their definitions were ultimately centred on “nature”. Though the specific focus varied somewhat, there was a common thread amongst all responses; every participant connected ecotourism to concepts of nature, environmental responsibility, or “the outdoors”. Residents displayed a greater focus on ecotourism’s benefits to tourists, while tourists concerned themselves more with the environmental impacts of ecotourism. Notably, however, within this range of responses, only a single definition made mention of any connection between ecotourism and cultural practices, local people, or economy. For all other participants, ecotourism was understood as being strictly concerned with ideas of nature. While it is possible that economic and cultural factors are of greater consideration during the implementation of ecotourism at this site, they were not focuses for the majority of the participants in this study.

Chapter 5: Results – Knowledge of Algonquin Park

The second main theme of the interviews and surveys focused on the subjects' knowledge of Algonquin Park. These questions garnered a noticeable discrepancy between the two groups. In long interviews, I questioned participants about the history of the area, and in both interviews and surveys I inquired about participants' knowledge of current use of the park and its land, and the biodiversity contained within the boundaries. Residents consistently demonstrated greater knowledge of and familiarity with all three subjects than did tourists.

History of the Park and Its Land

Residents

The resident participants were very knowledgeable on the basic history of park. All seven interviewees associated the name “Algonquin” with the First Nations peoples for which it was named. The residents were equally well informed on the subjects of historical land use and the motivations for creating the park.

“Before the park [the land] was being logged. It's been established actually for a logging preserve, so that nobody will turn it into Muskoka, which is good. And it's still doing that, which is excellent.”

(Male resident, Madawaska)

“[The land was primarily used for] logging. It was logging... And tourism, it had already started before 1893. Just starting fishing tourism and health tourism for the states. It was a health sanctuary for the Americans.”

(Female resident, Algonquin Highlands)

The question of land ownership and settlement addressed more complicated subjects. In the mid-eighteenth century, when Europeans began to occupy the region that is now Algonquin Park, the Iroquois and the Ojibwa peoples, in addition to the Algonquin, all had claims on the land. European settlement of the area led to the British government claiming ownership of the

land. However, complications on the issue of land ownership arose in 1869 when it was determined that the land had in fact never been ceded to the Crown (MacKay 2002:7).

Negotiations in this land claim are ongoing today.

Despite the complicated nature of these questions, residents again exhibited strong knowledge of the subject matter. All but one response from residents offered correct information regarding past land ownership and land conflicts. Additionally, four of these six residents expanded on their answers to discuss the complicated nature of this issue.

“Well, that’s very controversial. It was the government of Ontario, it was Crown Land, it was considered Crown Land, but it had been taken from the Algonquin Indians in the 1820s or something like that. I think it was around then that the Canadian government claimed it. But they’re losing it.”

(Female resident, Dwight)

Tourists

While all of the residents were well versed in the history of Algonquin Park, tourists’ responses were varied. Only two of the tourist interviewees correctly assessed the origin of the name “Algonquin”; the remaining four either answered incorrectly or responded that they did not know the origin of the name.

“I think it’s Spanish for ‘the forest’. No, just kidding. I have absolutely no idea what it means.”

(Male tourist, California)

Tourists fared better on the topic of land use, with five of the six correctly identifying the logging history in the area. While the residents responded with certainty, only one tourist was certain of his response; the remaining four tourists who answered correctly admitted that they were unsure of their answer or that they were hazarding an educated guess.

“I don’t know, but I would think it was used for logging. I mean, there’s the Logging Museum and everything, so that would make sense.”

(Female tourist, Ancaster)

When asked about land ownership and human settlement, tourist participants were again less knowledgeable than residents. The question of who had historically owned the land drew varied responses. Tourist responses to the question of who had historically owned the land were divided between those who cited First Nations ownership (three tourists), those who guessed it was government owned (one), and those who did not know who had previously owned the land (two).

“Um... First Nations peoples probably? I don't know what tribe.”
(Female tourist, Kitchener)

“I would think it would be provincial land, for the province.”
(Female tourist, Toronto)

“Honestly? No clue.”
(Male tourist, Ottawa)

Although the four participants who replied that they believed the land was owned by either First Nations peoples or the government were not wholly inaccurate, they each expressed uncertainty in their answers. Further, none expressed awareness of the complicated nature of the issue, or of the conflicts surrounding it.

Non-Tourism Land Use

Residents

Current non-tourism related uses of the park were well known amongst local residents. Every resident participant responded that they were cognizant of the fact that logging was permitted in the park, and all but one knew with certainty that hunting was allowed (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

“Logging definitely occurs, we're fully aware of it. There's trucks that go right by our road, we've had two loaded trucks go by us this morning.”
(Male resident, Madawaska)

“Yep, hunting is allowed in the park. Natives have hunting rights in it. And I think there is hunting in Cauliflower Lake, down below Galeairy, that’s open to public to hunt on tag as well... This [west] end does not allow it. But I know on the other end they do. And I know that the Algonquin do have hunting rights in certain areas.”

(Female resident, Algonquin Highlands)

Further, when I inquired about the extent of the park in which logging activities were permitted, all the residents produced relatively accurate estimates. All but one resident estimated that over half of the park’s total was open to logging (see Figure 5.1). Further, while acknowledging the extent to which logging occurs, seven participants discussed the importance of the logging industry to the people in the area.

“It’s a very large portion of the park, unbeknownst to people I think... Whitney even more so than us, but that’s the only thing that keeps us alive. That’s where we work. Because tourism... we’re seasonal.”

(Female resident, Dwight)

Tourists

In contrast, tourists were significantly less familiar with the various uses of the park. Just over half knew for certain or thought it likely that the park allowed regulated hunting (see Figure 5.2). One participant reasoned that since fishing is permitted, it was likely that hunting would be as well.

“I think it is probably [permitted], but you have to get a license or something. And maybe in specific areas. ‘Cause fishing is hunting, except it’s hunting fish.”

(Female tourist, Toronto)

Only four tourists expressed the belief that hunting did not occur in the park, while the remaining five were unsure.

On the question of logging, however, tourists were largely unaware of any activity currently occurring within the park (see Figure 5.1). Five did not know whether logging was permitted, and eleven did not think that logging occurred at all within park boundaries.

“I wouldn’t think so. Not in a provincial park, no. That’s why there’s a park there, right?”

(Female tourist, Red Deer, Alberta)

“Hmm... I don’t think so. I’m gonna say no, because that would bad.”

(Female tourist, Kingston)

Of the five tourists who were aware of the logging activity, only one, who had formerly studied park management in Ontario, was familiar with the extent to which it occurred. All others grossly underestimated the pervasiveness of logging activities (see Figure 5.1). Another tourist who was aware of logging expressed awareness of the importance of the industry to the people and economy of the region, yet assumed that logging was still very limited within the park.

“I think it’s allowed in... maybe 10% [of the park area]... I mean, logging is pretty much what gives people jobs up there, in Algonquin... It’s like half of the jobs up there.”

(Female tourist, Kitchener)

Biodiversity in Algonquin Park

Residents

For the first interview question on the subject of biodiversity, I asked participants to name as many species as they could think of that are found within the park. Unsurprisingly, given the 10,000 possible answers, responses to this question were varied.

“It’s kind of cheating for me, because I grew up here. Well, they’ve reintroduced caribou into the far end. We have black bear. There have been sightings of large cats in the last two years that have been unconfirmed by naturalists, but there have been Ministry of Natural Resources employees that have been witness to that. You have your moose, your deer, we have our wolf population, which is also another controversial thing, whether we really do have red wolves or whether they’re a hybrid coyote bullshit thing. What else do we have, from your pine martens to your fishers to your otters to your fish species; I think there are over 50 some odd species of fish in Opeongo alone. Yeah, I can keep going... I didn’t even get into turtles, because it’s also one of the biggest sanctuaries for our turtle population, which is on almost every turtle is on the suspected list... We’re very lucky to

have such a diversified wildlife, and very different from one section of the park to the other, as far as wildlife goes.”

(Female, Algonquin Highlands)

“[Laughs] Wow, well that’s a major question. Obviously there are the popular ones: moose, bears, wolves, deer, and things like that. There are beaver, turtles, frogs, birds... Insects, god knows how many of those there are. Seems to be a lot! ... And fish, obviously... Yeah, nobody’s making the extensive list here. You’d be here for weeks!”

(Male resident, Huntsville)

Almost all residents listed wolves, bears, moose, and birds, and a smaller majority named deer, fish, and turtles. Beyond these, responses were quite variable, with the thirteen residents naming a total of 24 different species or higher taxa. Interestingly, despite my having specified that the category of “species” included species outside of the animal kingdom (such as plants and insects), not one response included plant species.

When asked whether any species in the park were considered to be at risk, eleven of the thirteen residents replied definitively that they knew of endangered species within Algonquin, while the remaining two responded that they did not know.

“Endangered, there’s a number of them. Obviously... the Wood turtle, that’s a big one... They’ve had a lot of focus on it... Also endangered, wolves are endangered... they’re classified endangered. They’re fairly healthy (in Algonquin) but they’re classified as endangered. There’s a number of bird species, like plenty of bird species... like the Peregrine falcon hasn’t made a return, but that’s an extinct species from the area.”

(Male resident, Whitney)

“There are definitely endangered species in the park. I believe, if I’m not mistaken, that the wolves might be endangered. I’m not too sure what else, but I know that they definitely exist... Oh, turtles too! You’ll hear some hoopla about that every now and again... Yeah, I’m not sure I can name any others. There’s more than that though.”

(Male resident, Huntsville)

Turtle and wolf species were most frequently listed as endangered species in the park, included in six and seven responses respectively. Four residents also made mention of the Peregrine

falcon. Three participants indicated that while they were certain that the park contained endangered species, they were unsure of what particular species were considered to be at risk.

To conclude this section of the interview, I asked participants to estimate the total number of species found within the park boundaries. Residents' responses to this question ranged from several hundred to over two million. Two residents estimated fewer than 1,000 species, and three others estimated well over 15,000 (see Figure 5.3). The participant offering the highest estimate explained her reasoning as due to the potential for undiscovered species throughout the area.

“Oh my goodness. I would think there would have to be at least 2 million different species, if you're doing flora and fauna, and mammal and reptile and bird. I don't even know. I'd go almost to infinity on that one, because who's to say what's in the bottom of [Lake] Opeongo, I don't think they've been there yet!”

(Female resident, Algonquin Highlands)

The eight remaining responses, however, were somewhat more reserved that this, and were in the general range of current conservative estimates from experts, falling between 1,000-15,000.

“Oh geez, how many, like a number? Thousands. Thousands easily. Like, you include plants, and birds, and everything... Thousands. Like, I'd say five to ten thousand for sure. Even fifteen probably. Yeah, fifteen thousand is definitely possible.”

(Male resident, Dwight)

Tourists

When asked to name as many species from the park that they could, tourists offered responses similar to those of resident participants. The most popular responses from tourists were bears, moose, birds, and deer. Fish, turtles, wolves, and insects were the next more frequently named taxa, but each was cited by fewer than half of the tourist participants.

“Mammals... bear, deer, elk, moose, lots and lots of different birds, bugs, mosquitoes, probably beavers – I think one of the lakes is 'Beaver Lake', so probably beavers – blue jays, hawks probably, eagles. I don't know. That's about it. I mean, I know there's many more, but in terms of big mammals, there probably isn't many more big mammals. Just like rodents and stuff.”

(Male tourist, Toronto)

The twenty-one tourist participants listed a total of forty-three different species or higher taxa between them. Plant species were similarly overlooked from tourist responses, with only one participant, a male tourist from Richmond Hill, naming “trees and plants” within his species list; no other response included plants or plant species.

In contrast to residents, the majority of tourist participants were unaware of any at risk or endangered species in the park. Seventeen tourists responded that they did not know whether Algonquin contained any such species.

“Uhhh... hm. I don’t know. I know some frogs are [endangered], but I really don’t know if the ones that live here are.”

(Female tourist, Toronto)

Only four tourists responded positively that they believed there were endangered species within the park.

“I bet wolves are endangered. Maybe. Ok wolves and maybe a bird species. Oh and Peregrine falcons! ... I read about them ... Yeah, I’m gonna say Peregrine falcons and wolves. Final answer.”

(Female tourist, Kingston)

Wolves and Peregrine falcons were again popular answers, each cited in two responses. One tourist guessed that, in addition to wolves, lynx and some plant species were likely to be endangered, and another added turtles to the list. Only one participant responded that, although they had stated that some species in the park were endangered, they did not know which particular species might be.

On the final question, asking participants to estimate the total number of species, tourist participants were much more conservative in their responses than resident participants. Tourist estimates ranged from 20 to 5,000, while the majority (fifteen of twenty-one tourists) estimating that fewer than 1,000 species were contained within the park (see Figure 5.3).

“Two hundred. Uh, no, no, no, no, there must be so many. Um, that are found in the park? Five hundred.”

(Male tourist, Ajax)

“Don’t even know. They don’t even know yet. I’d say 500, easy.”

(Male tourist, Kitchener)

Even the highest estimate of all tourist participants (5,000) was far below the actual number of species that have been observed and documented in Algonquin Park to date (see Brooks et al. 2003; Crins et al. 1998; Dickson and Crins 1993; FOA 2005; FOA 2013; Jones 2003; Mandrak and Crossman 2003; Marshall 1997; Strickland 2006; Strickland and Rutter 2002; Thorn 2006; Tozer 2011).

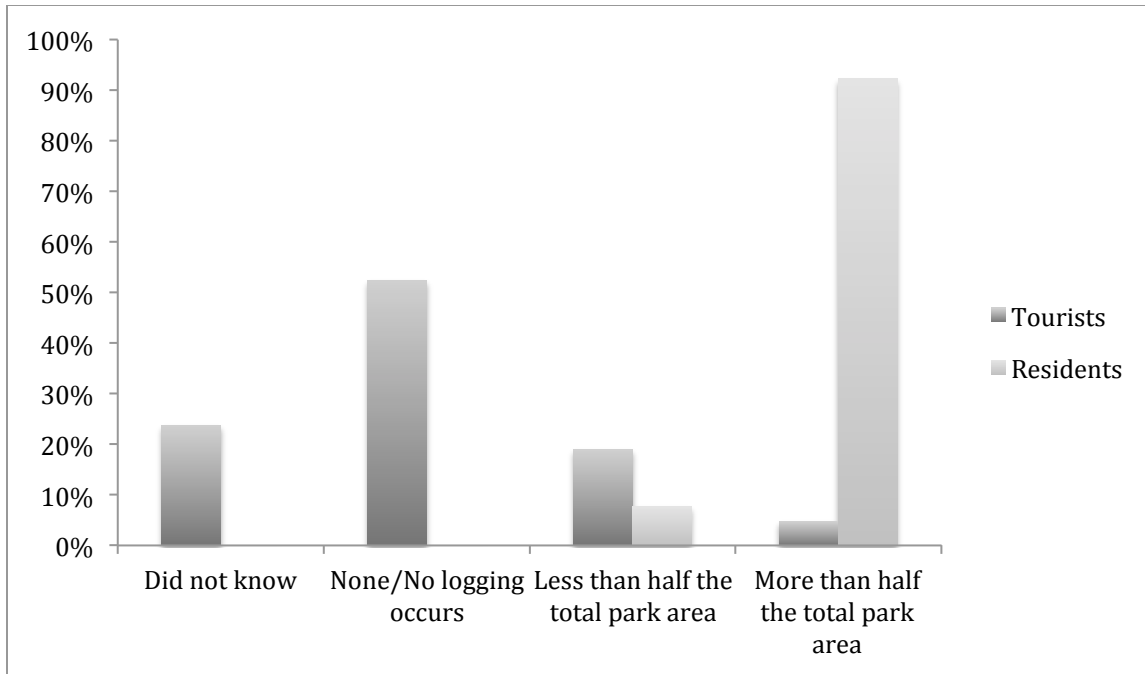


Figure 5.1 – Breakdown of participants’ estimates of what portion of the total area of Algonquin Park is open to logging activity.

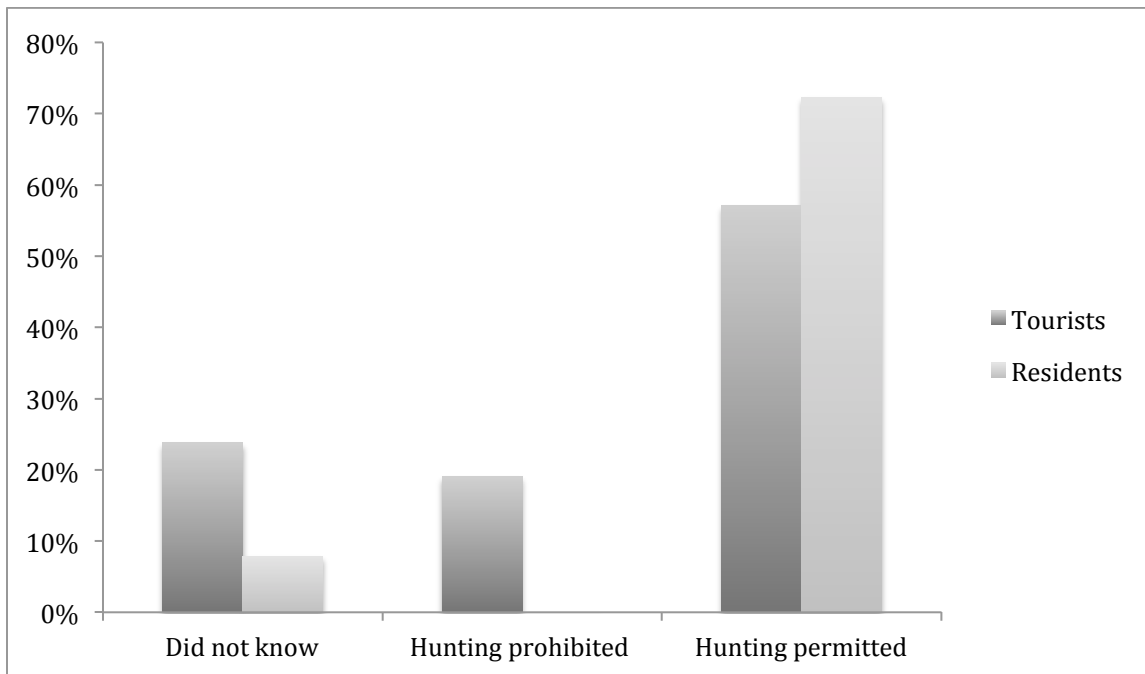


Figure 5.2 – Breakdown of participants’ responses to whether hunting are permitted in Algonquin Park.

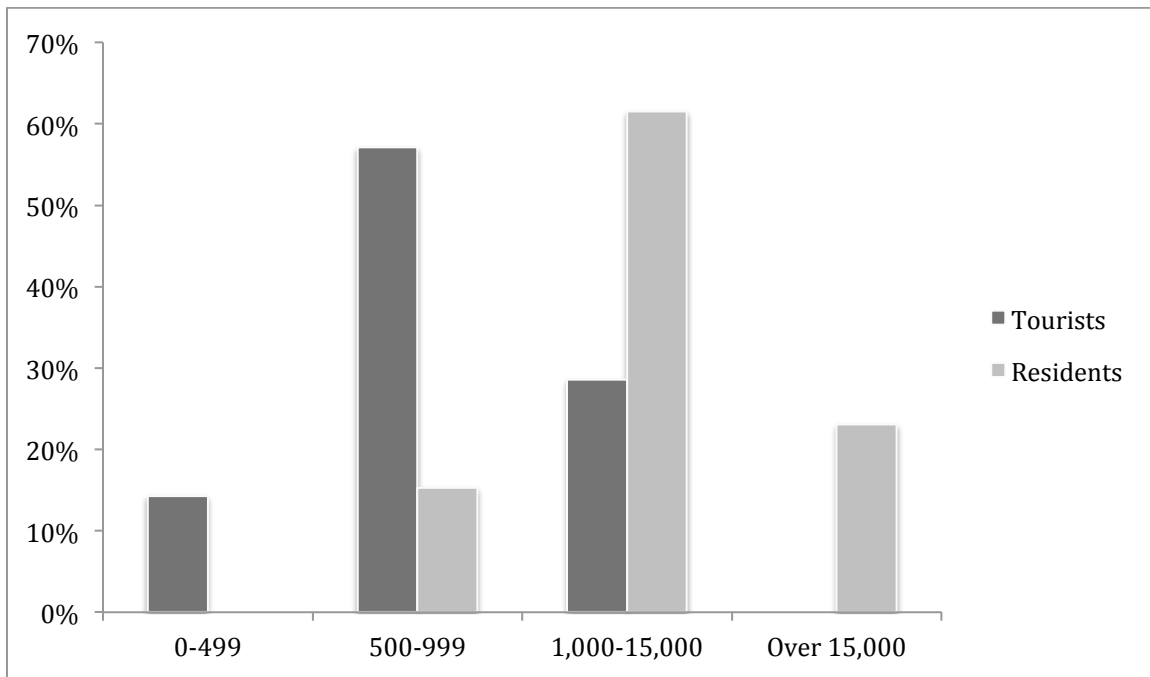


Figure 5.3 – Participants’ estimates of total number of species contained within Algonquin Park.

Chapter 6: Results – Perceptions of Ecotourism

The third section of the research examined participants' perspectives on the impacts of ecotourism in the park. To preface this, I inquired about the tourists' activities in the park and any engagement they had had with local residents or businesses. With resident participants, I asked about the impact of park tourism on their own livelihoods. In all interviews and surveys, I inquired about participants' perspectives of how ecotourism in Algonquin Park impacted the ecology and wildlife of the park and how it affected local residents.

Tourist Activities and Engagement With Residents

Prior to examining their perspectives of ecotourism, I asked tourist participants about their own activities in Algonquin Park. Hiking the interpretive trails along the Highway 60 Corridor (the Corridor henceforth) was the most popular activity among participants, with fifteen of the twenty-one tourists indicating that they planned to hike some of these trails (Figure 6.1). Eight participants indicated that they would be canoeing, and seven were going backcountry camping in the Interior. Between all tourist participants, a total of twelve different activities were listed (Figure 6.1).

Fewer than half of the tourists (seven participants) indicated that they had rented equipment for their trip. All of these participants listed canoeing as one of their activities, and they had all rented canoes and the required accessories, such as paddles and safety gear. Of these seven participants, four had rented their equipment from outfitters within the park itself. Two others had obtained their rentals prior to embarking on their trip, from outfitters in Toronto and Waterloo respectively. The final two participants had both utilised outfitters located in Dwight to rent their equipment.

When asked about their engagement with local residents and businesses during their trip, all but three tourists responded that they had engaged to some degree with local businesses. Participants had most frequently patronised gas stations (ten participants), accommodations (nine), beer and liquor stores (six), grocery stores (six), and restaurants (five). (It should be noted that many of my interview and surveys were conducted at a hostel near the park, which contributed to the number of participants who responded that they had used accommodations near the park). These businesses were located in eight different towns, located on both sides of the park (see Table 6.1), and many participants visited businesses in multiple towns. However, while sixteen participants had visited towns to the west of the park, only five indicated that they had been to the east side. Additionally, locations near the Corridor were significantly more popular among tourists than any other regions (see Table 6.1).

The Impacts of Ecotourism on Park Ecology and Wildlife

In all interviews and surveys, I asked participants about their perspectives of the various impacts of park tourism. The first part of this section focused on the manner in which Algonquin Park ecotourism affects the ecology and wildlife within the park.

Residents

The majority of residents expressed that, while they felt that the presence of tourists would not have a positive impact on the ecology of the park, they did not believe that tourism was hugely detrimental to the park. All but one of the resident participants expressed the belief that, though tourism had the potential to be quite destructive to the ecology of the park, there were a number of factors at play to minimise these effects. These factors included effective management of park tourism (seven residents), restriction of the majority of tourism to limited

areas within the park (primarily the Corridor) (five), high environmental ethic and responsibility of most tourists (four), or a combination of these.

“You know, I don’t think it’s all that bad. I mean, I wouldn’t say that it’s great, because, well, thousands of people are coming through here all the time right? There’s gonna be the obvious detrimental effects from that. At the same time though, it could be much worse. I think the people coming through the park are, for the most part, pretty good; I think most people are at least making an effort to be responsible... And the park itself has done a good job I think. Tourism is mostly limited to the highway [Highway 60 Corridor], you know? There’s a lot less action in the Interior, so tourism isn’t wreaking havoc on the whole thing. It’s actually fairly limited. I’d be far more concerned about the effects of industry, logging, but even that is well maintained... You know, overall I think they’ve done a good job with the park.”

(Female resident, Huntsville)

“I think they’ve done a really, really good job trying to keep it contained. And given human nature, that’s an enormous task. The fact that they’re only exposed a miniscule amount of the park’s land I think saves the park. As long as they don’t open the Interior, and they keep the restricted environment areas that they have, like the wildlife areas that they’ve got restricted access to, and manage those and police those, I think it’s ok... And it takes a concerted effort to get into the areas that are interior. And for those people, then bless be they enjoy it if they’ve made that concerted effort, as long as they leave it the way they found it. And the people that are doing that, the people that are making that effort, are going to leave it [the way they found it] ... They’re taking their garbage out, and they’re taking the guy who left his garbage out, and they’re neatening up the campsites and so on, on their own accord.”

(Female resident, Dwight)

“That’s a tough one... It can’t be positive. Like, it’s gotta be negative from an environmental perspective, because you’ve got all these people in the park, roaming around, obviously spooking wildlife, you know what I mean? So the park, if you thought of it as a refuge, obviously the people are a negative effect... [But] the park regulations again are quite good in managing flow and things like that. So I don’t really have any complaints.”

(Male resident, Madawaska)

Four residents discussed the possibility of tourism having any positive impact on the ecology and wildlife contained within the park. These responses each began by discussing some potential negative impacts of tourism, but continued on to acknowledge that tourism was indeed

one of the primary reasons for the very existence of the park. So while the immediate effects of tourist activity may be detrimental to the ecology in the area, tourism was partially responsible for the creation and continuation of the park as a protected area, and, consequently, also partially responsible for any benefits the park might offer.

“[Despite some negative impacts of tourism], I think it’ll be ok, because it has to be ok. Without a source of income, which is the tourism and the people being there, you can’t manage the park. It’s a catch-22, it really is. We don’t have a kitty of wealth in the province or our country to be able to just say, ‘Here’s what we’re gonna do: This is Algonquin Park. Everybody stay out, and you can visit once a week on Tuesdays.’ So it’s gotta be able to be marketed and managed in a very progressive, eye-open environmental way, in my mind... I don’t think it’s the best scenario for any park that there is, but I do think it’s the best scenario for this park at this time. As I say, it’s gotta have an income and nobody appreciates it if they can’t use it. And if they don’t know it’s there and can’t come and visit it, it’s no good.”

(Female resident, Algonquin Highlands)

Interestingly, over a third of the resident participants suggested that the most significant negative impacts of tourism stemmed perhaps from sources other than tourists themselves. Five residents spoke of budget cuts and lack of funding for governing bodies of the park, in their discussions of the ecological impacts of tourism.

“I don’t know, I think [tourism] is pretty well-managed... The only think I worry about, and I wouldn’t want to step on any toes by saying this... is that whenever there’s a cut made, in the MNR or on parks or something like that, Canada Parks, they cut the boots on the ground and they don’t cut the guys sitting at desks doing nothing. And that’s never said enough... And I think you get into a really tough position, where obviously the guys that make the decisions aren’t going to slit their own throats. Talk to actual employees, they’re the guys that their necks are always on the chopping block. And I know people that will complain to the superintendent about this or that, little things, but there’s nothing he can do because he’s gotta work within a budget. But I always wonder, is there too much dead weight, well over and above the guys that are out on the ground, seeing and doing stuff. With respect to ecology, there’s gotta be a balance. And if they’re slipping anywhere, I would think it’s just because of lack of funding.”

(Male resident, Dwight)

“Throughout most of the park? The impact would be minimal, I would think. The main – maybe the only areas – where it’s a major concern is the really busy places. Really, along [Highway] 60. And I think they deal with it there, do their best to balance it... I wouldn’t want to be trying to balance it. Look at Canoe Lake, the portage store at Canoe Lake. How many hundreds of people are there in a week? They’ve done the best thing they could do, they’ve concreted the crap out of it. It’s the best thing they could have done, because it stops erosion, it stops all that other stuff. But is that really the park? That’s the park everybody sees, the majority of tourists, that’s all they see... But it’s gotta be done, especially with budget cuts. Like, the ministry just got slammed; everything got badly hit in the fall. That’s like – ouch!”

(Female resident, South River)

Although in my question I simply asked what impacts, positive or negative, they thought tourism would have on the ecology and the wildlife of the park, these five participants each independently segued to a discussion of funding issues related to the park and park management.

Tourists

When assessing the impacts of tourism on the ecology of the park, tourist participants, as a whole, focused their responses more exclusively on behaviours, activities, and levels of responsibility of park tourists, than did the residents. Seventeen of the twenty-one tourists discussed these factors. Fifteen of these suggested that the impacts of tourism would be variable, ranging from neutral to negative, as tourists would act with varying levels of responsibility.

“I think most people that come to the park are responsible. But for the few that are not responsible, then it’s detrimental.”

(Female tourist, Limerick, Ireland)

“Depends. I think that... having it predominantly canoe-based requires a certain level of knowledge from the visitor, so that it artificially makes sure that the people are already knowledge-based. And I think a lot of the people who come up here are respectful of it.... Like, they don’t [bring] packaging or litter, they take that all with them... I don’t know about soaps and that sort of thing. I think people bring, for the most part, biodegradable stuff and all that... But then... on Highway 60 you have tons of campgrounds in the area, with car parking and stuff. So that kind of area, I think it’s more accessible, so you’re gonna get a little bit more degradation than any other the other places. Different people, different type of camping for sure.”

(Male tourist, Kitchener)

Only five participants responded that they believed the impact of tourism to be unequivocally negative, from an ecological standpoint.

“I would assume completely negatively. I mean, as opposed to if it was all left natural. ‘Cause whatever they do, they’re disturbing new growth or, you know, wildlife and their mating patterns and travelling plans. Yeah, I would think pretty much completely negatively.”

(Female tourist, Kingston)

“Obviously I think it has a positive impact on the humans, but then negative on wildlife. I think in the way humans touch anything... A negative impact could be littering, running the car, I don’t know, hitting them with cars, any kind of pollution caused by the chemicals we would use or the cars [would use] also. Burning wood, that causes some kind of something, doesn’t it?... I do feel a little bad, actually, every time I have contact with nature. Just because it’s upsetting it in some kind of way.”

(Female tourist, Orillia)

While many residents discussed matters of park management, governance, or income in their responses, only one tourist participant considered factors not directly related to the tourists themselves.

“Tourists are obviously having a negative effect. We’re disrupting nature. I mean, parks need maintaining and stuff like that, and I guess you kind of need money to maintain it, but they seem to have maintained themselves for millions of years. So I don’t know how that works. But either way, tourism’s gotta be a negative thing for the wildlife up here.”

(Male tourist, Ajax)

Aside from this response, all other tourists either focused on the actions and mindsets tourists themselves, or offered little detail on the manner in which they thought tourism would impact the park’s ecology. Further, no tourist participants discussed any potential positive impacts of tourism.

The Impacts of Ecotourism on Local Residents and Communities

The remainder of this section focused on the manner in which ecotourism impacts communities in the vicinity of the park and the residents living in them. In addition to inquiring

about all participants' perspectives regarding this impact, I asked residents to discuss how much ecotourism in the park impacted their own lives and livelihoods specifically.

Residents

The vast majority of resident participants assessed tourism from Algonquin Park to be imperative to local economies. Eleven of the thirteen participants responded that tourism was critical to many communities around the park, providing the majority of employment and income to residents.

“Well, specifically this side [west of the park, on Hwy. 60] – like Dwight, Oxtongue Lake, Dorset, Huntsville – tourism is it. Period. Because most of the industry has melted away due to off-shoring mainly. What we had in the way of industry, in Huntsville especially, which would have employed people from the next couple of communities around – it’s gone... Tourism is everything. And it is specifically for a town like this. Because outside of a few contractors that are building cottages, there’s just – there’s nothing else. Period.”

(Male resident, Dwight)

“If you just look at it here. I make my living off the park... we’ve got our employees... And we all make our living just on the park... My personal prediction is that, in my lifetime, there won’t be any logging in Algonquin. There’s just too much demand from the public and from, you know, the South, people that use the park... the transition’s happening. It’s happened... 20 years ago, the majority was logging, and then service industries like the hospital and things like that. Now tourism is a big part of that. It’s grown. And it should. The way my perspective is, if you want to preserve something, the best way to do it is to show it off... I would say [tourism] is a 10 [out of 10, as importance to the local communities]... And I don’t think businesses take advantage of it enough.”

(Male resident, Madawaska)

Only two residents viewed tourism from Algonquin Park to be anything less than essential to local communities.

“It’s definitely important. But I don’t think it’s the be all and end all to everything. Some people think like that. I think there’s other options, we’re branching out some... If the park disappeared tomorrow, taking all of its tourism? Yeah, that’d be tough. The area would definitely be in trouble. But

I think, as a whole, we'd manage – hurt a lot for a while, but survive... It's not everything. Tourism is big though, for sure."

(Female resident, Huntsville)

"You know, the people travel through our area to go to the park. We may have 800,000 people travel into the park. Very few of them stop... really, honestly most people are not utilising the areas, in my opinion, outside of the park. They're going to the park, they're staying in the park, they're doing what they've chosen to do within the park's amenities... Those people are going into the park to stay in the park and then leave. They're not having a lot of economic effect on the communities outside of the immediate park...I think it's good for the communities, because then people see them. As people, you can't live in the park. So it does give us the ability, if people are looking for places to come and buy or to rent on a longer term or don't wish to stay in a rustic setting or glamour camp, whatever, then yes, we certainly do get that fallout. But the people that the park is the destination, if that's their destination in the summer, we don't get anything from that. Unless it's a pouring rain day – then they're in Huntsville... I wouldn't say it's negative, because it's people passing through, so you're getting followed. You're definitely getting followed... I'd consider [the park] an amenity... It's not significant, in my opinion."

(Female resident, Algonquin Highlands)

These two were, however, the minority amongst the residents. The overwhelming perspective, from residents on both sides of the park, was that the tourism industry was critical to local residents and communities.

When asked about the impact of park tourism on their own livelihoods, however, residents were somewhat more varied in their responses.

"For me? Yeah, it's a big deal. My whole livelihood comes from the park, definitely. It's been huge. Like, you can't get rich, but it's a good lifestyle."

(Male resident, Whitney)

"It's a pretty big component [of my livelihood]. During the summer at least, it's the majority of my business. Overall, I'd say it's probably 60-70%... 'Cause we do have customers from all over who are buying our products. Tourists here, in Algonquin, are a lot of it obviously, but they're not our only source of business. Not by a long shot."

(Male resident, Huntsville)

"Maybe 10% of my business comes from Algonquin Park. But the people that come to go to the park stay in my area, so therefore I still get business

that's related to the draw from the park... The guests coming out of the park that are actually camping or staying in the park are maybe 10%, but I probably have another 10% that are staying in my area because the park is there, that use my business as well. So it probably makes up 20% of my business that's related to the park itself."

(Female resident, Algonquin Highlands)

While most participants still viewed tourism as being very important, fewer assessed it as being as overwhelmingly crucial to their own livelihoods as it was to the community or region as a whole.

Tourists

When asked about the impacts of ecotourism in Algonquin Park on local residents and local communities, all tourist participants responded that the park tourism must have a positive effect, to some degree, in terms of employment and income. Tourists' assessments were, however, somewhat more reserved than those of most residents. While most tourists deemed tourism to be important to local economies, none went so far as to evaluate it as absolutely essential. Still, fifteen of the tourist participants assessed the tourism as having a wholly positive impact on local residents.

"I'm sure they do quite well, and [tourists] probably impact them positively... You know, they get groceries, and they'll get Dairy Queen and all that. And also, you have to buy gear, and you might not buy it right in the park, or rent it in the park. So I'm sure they do well."

(Female tourist, Toronto)

"I think it's good, it's under control. I think it's good because it's stimulation for the economy of the little towns."

(Male resident, Toronto)

The remaining six tourists viewed tourism as likely having a mixed effect on local people.

"A bit of both [positive and negative impacts]. It is a steady flow [of money], but I think it's very seasonal. And then also, whenever you get a high, like a summer population of people, it can be hazardous to the calm

way of things I guess... or the normal way of things. Because then you have to bring in more police and more stuff like that too. So then you're making more money, but you're also spending more money to be able to mitigate it, so it's kind of an issue."

(Male tourist, Ottawa)

"Well, it definitely brings money in, but then again, it drives up the prices of everything around here. Therefore, some people win, some people lose... A mixed impact, absolutely."

(Male tourist, California)

Of the six tourists who suggested that tourism may have anything other than an entirely positive impact, four believed that the seasonality of tourism would create some negative impacts, due to both the decrease in economic benefit during the winter months and the disruptive influx of a tourist population in the summer months. Interestingly, it was only tourists who discussed this latter issue; no residents mentioned an increased population due to tourism as a potential problem.

Table 6.1 – Locations of businesses patronised by tourist participants

Region	Town	Number of Visitors
West of the park, North of Hwy 60	Sundridge	1
West of the park, South of Hwy 60	Barrie	2
	Gravenhurst	1
Hwy 60, west side of the park	Huntsville	8
	Dwight	2
	Algonquin Highlands	7
Hwy 60, east of the park	Whitney	4
	Barry's Bay	1

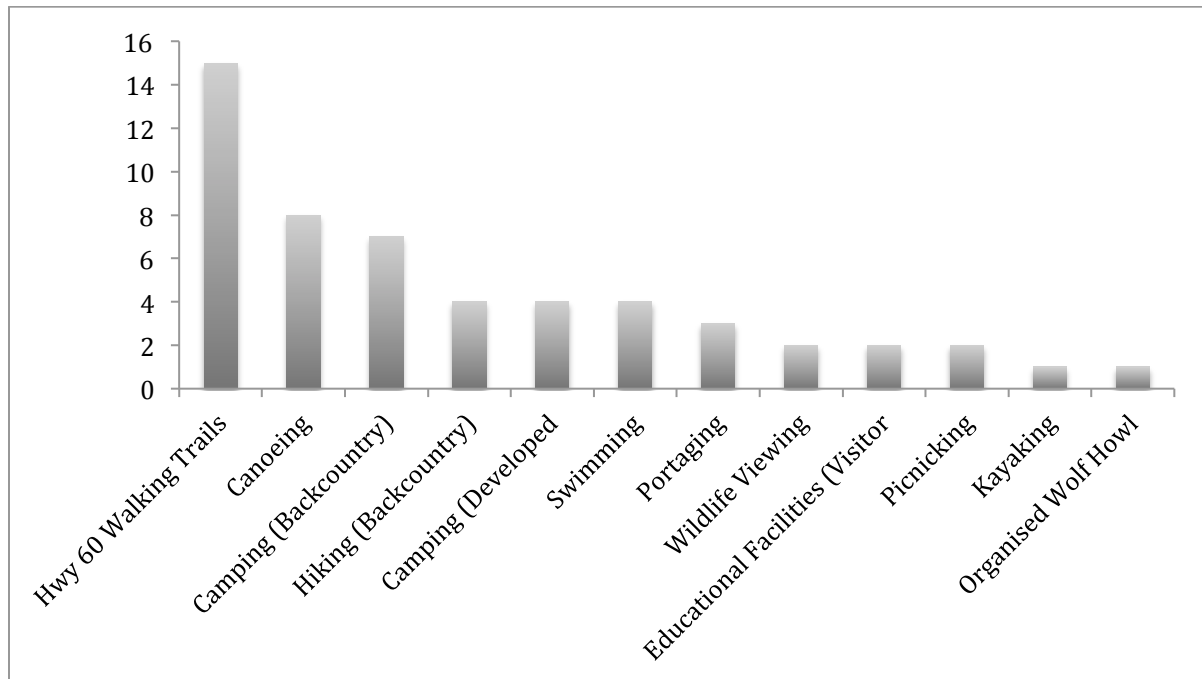


Figure 6.1 – Tourist participants' activities and number of participants engaging in each

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusions

Residents

Residents' perspectives suggested that, to them, the park itself and concepts of conservation were highly representational of their own livelihoods. They were consistently more likely to present multi-faceted views and broader understandings of the subject matter. Though clearly in tune with environmental perspectives, residents' perspectives often incorporated more economic outlooks.

Perhaps because residents constantly engage with the park – both human and nonhuman elements – they demonstrated an awareness of the necessary interrelationships between these components. The park encompassed not only “nature”, but also issues of governance, natural resource use, and the business of tourism. Further, resident participants assigned different priority to the various sides of the park than did tourists. While “nature” was appreciated in and of itself, residents also expressed recognition of the importance of the park's ecology from an economic standpoint, both as a resource for exploitation and as an attraction to draw tourism business. “Nature” was less of a distinct and novel entity, but rather it was simply incorporated into their lives on a more regular and practical basis. Ultimately, residents were more likely to recognise the primacy of non-tourism uses of the park.

Importantly, not only did residents recognise utilitarian uses of the park, but they generally viewed these activities positively. Many residents stressed that the logging industry was (or, at the very least, had been until recently) a primary source of employment for many in the area. One resident went so far as to state that logging is “the only things that keeps us alive.” Additionally, no residents expressed unfavourable opinions about logging in the park; indeed, many praised the manner in which logging was managed and balanced with other uses of the

land. A resident on the East side of the park described logging in the park as “one of the best-managed operations in probably North America.” Residents’ awareness of resource extraction does not appear to present a threat to forestry activity within the park, an issue that has arisen with the reactions of non-resident publics to logging in the park (as will be discussed later). Thus, residents’ cognizance of resource exploitation and view of the park from an economic or utilitarian perspective are likely to in fact be of benefit to the park and its industry.

Interestingly, residents’ perceptions of ecotourism diverged somewhat from their outlooks of the park. Despite strong associations between tourism in the park and livelihood, only one participant explicitly discussed any cultural or economic aspects in their definition of ecotourism. This participant recognised that there is no single definition of ecotourism, but rather it can be staged to suit marketing purposes. She described:

“Ecotourism is whatever the person who’s trying to market what they’re doing defines it as. That would be my definition of ecotourism.... Everybody’s ecotourism. You’re ecotourism, I’m ecotourism.”

(Female resident, Algonquin Highlands)

Residents were clearly mindful of the economic impacts, as the majority assessed park tourism to be of critical importance to local communities, but this relationship was not a consideration in their conceptualisations of ecotourism. While the park was acknowledged as fulfilling economic and commercial functions, ecotourism itself was not often recognised as pursuing these objectives. It was seen as primarily concerning the tourist experience and, to a lesser extent, the environment. These perspectives may stem from their particular motivations for and expectations of ecotourism. For residents, the group more economically invested in ecotourism, the enjoyment of tourists is tantamount to business. Therefore, it is unsurprising that they would put greater emphasis on aspects of ecotourism that focus on benefitting the tourists.

Their perceptions suggested that the economic benefits to local communities were seen as a side effect of ecotourism in the park rather than an intentional outcome.

Tourists

Tourists' perspectives of the park, ecotourism, and conceptual issues demonstrated a more environmental focus, with little emphasis on economic factors. This difference could possibly be a result of their position at the time of the interview, rather than a real difference in conceptualisation. Visitors' role as ecotourists spending time within the park and experiencing "nature" may have added to a mindset with a more environmental emphasis and a view of "nature" as something distinctly separate from themselves. The majority of tourists saw nature and humans as highly separated entities, with humankind existing external to "nature." This dichotomy was important, as it was central to their conceptualisations of difference. Their perspectives of underlying concepts (such as "nature") and the impacts of ecotourism revealed a focus on the actions, behaviours, and mindsets of tourists, viewing humans as foreign bodies entering (and at times disrupting) a natural environment of which they were not a part.

There was a significant disconnect, however, between tourists' perceptions and the reality of the park. To tourists, Algonquin Park was seen as representative of nature and wilderness. At the heart of their perspectives was the desire to see, appreciate, and enjoy such "nature." Economic factors and issues of management in the park often went overlooked by tourists, while industry and exploitation of resources were largely unknown. From the standpoint of many tourists, the park offered a rich and seemingly pristine wilderness, an escape from urban life, and a means of "getting away from it all."

Staging Algonquin Park for Public Consumption

This disconnect is likely a somewhat intentional construct. The ideas of an untouched environment, undisturbed wildlife, and a peaceful retreat from busy everyday life were oft-cited reasons for visiting the park. Sullyng such images with those of industry and business would likely detract from the appeal of the park to visitors and potential visitors. As such, these sides of the park are well hidden. It has instead been marketed to tourists as a place of wilderness and a peaceful setting for recreational activities (Baker 2002). The Ontario Parks website, a primary source for information and trip planning for tourists (IPSOS 2012a:28; 2012b:30; 2012c:32), offers the following description:

“The essence of Algonquin is in its vast interior of maple hills, rocky ridges, and thousands of lakes. The only way to explore the interior of this park is by canoe or on foot.”

(Ontario Parks 2013a)

Staging the Park

This sort of marketing, which is the primary information that many tourists are exposed to, has encouraged a discrepancy between perception and reality among tourists. This discrepancy is not only beneficial to park tourism, as it creates an image of the park that appeals to potential tourists, but it is also in the best interest of the park’s other uses. There have been numerous episodes of public backlash against logging concessions in the park, which have on occasion incited efforts to put a stop to forestry activities (see Garfinkel 2012; Mead et al. 2000; Ontario Nature 2013). Given such public reaction, it is likely in the best interest of the industry to minimise the publicity that logging in Algonquin Park receives. The park is thus “staged” accordingly in representations to the general public.

Current forestry activities are not kept in total secrecy by park facilities and publications, but are nonetheless largely concealed by an emphasis on historical aspects of the industry.

Tourist participants saw logging primarily as an activity of the past, perceptions that arose from what appears to be a deliberate representation on the park's behalf. Public sources of information intended for tourists and prospective tourists (such as the Ontario Parks and Friends of Algonquin official websites, informative brochures, and displays and exhibits in tourist facilities) make minimal mention of logging that currently occurs within the park. While this is notable, however, it is not altogether unexpected. These sources are primarily intended to contribute to the public appeal of the park as a recreation destination and to visitor experience within the park, both of which are largely unrelated to the forestry industry.

The lack of emphasis on current logging activities is more noteworthy in the Algonquin Park Logging Museum. The museum, a tourist attraction near the east end of the Corridor, is intended to "present an overview of logging in Algonquin Park" (Strickland 2008:1). However, the exhibits and publications of the facility present primarily a *historical* overview of logging in the park. The 33-page museum guidebook makes no mention of current forestry activities until a half-page discussion on page 31. The first 30 pages discuss forestry in the past exclusively, supplemented by black and white sketches depicting logging throughout history (see Strickland 2008).

Through these representations, logging in Algonquin Park has been presented primarily as an activity of the past. Current logging activities are downplayed to tourists, strategically hidden in the shadows of history. This concealment has not gone entirely unrecognised; it has been described in literature (Baker 2002:200; Duffy 2002:86; Kates 1992:21-34) and was discussed by many residents as well. However, it was not widely recognised amongst tourist participants, though such representations play a significant role in shaping visitors' perceptions of the park. That logging is permitted within large portions of the park was widely unknown

amongst tourists, though almost all participants demonstrated an awareness of the historical prevalence of forestry activities in the area. Even among the tourists who were aware of current logging activity, most grossly underestimated the extent to which it occurred.

Such concealment appears to be neither possible nor beneficial when staging the park for local residents. Resident participants were very much aware of activities, indicating that they knew people employed in the industry, frequently saw logging trucks on the road, and were aware of logging facilities operating in the region. This awareness amongst residents, however, is unlikely to pose a threat to the park and park forestry. As described previously, the residents involved in my study generally viewed logging positively and expressed support for the industry. Furthermore, the residents are inclined to view the park as enmeshed with their livelihoods, which include economic factors, and logging is an integrate benefit to economic stability.

Staged Authenticity

Algonquin Park's publications and facilities aid in presenting the various functions of the park differently for different publics. However, I would argue that the park is staged for tourists in other manners as well. As discussed in Chapter 2, tourists often embark on ecotourism experiences in the developing world with certain expectations and preconceptions (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:317). These authors observe that, when tourists travel to locations that are culturally distinct from their own, they often perceive local people as being "exotic" and bear some expectation of experiencing unique and authentic cultural practices (Carrier and MacLeod 2005:329). Notions of "exotic peoples" become additional attractions for tourists. In such cases, local residents may be economically motivated to fulfill these perceptions of exoticism through appearance and behaviour, leading to cases of staged authenticity to satisfy expectations.

Staged authenticity in Algonquin takes a different form. The overwhelming majority of tourists in Ontario provincial parks originate from Canada or the United States (IPSOS 2012a:15; 2012b:15; 2012c:15), and are thus unlikely to view local cultural practices as a significantly exotic attraction. However, many visitors to Algonquin Park hold strong expectations of experiences outside the norms of their everyday lives, and many of these expectations revolve around the prospect of seeing wildlife (Strickland and Rutter 2002:6). It is the park's wildlife, rather than the residents and culture around the park, that is the object of commodification and fetishisation by tourists in Algonquin.

Driving along the Corridor in the summer, one is likely to encounter a scene in which parked cars line the side of the highway (Strickland and Rutter 2002:6), a sure sign of a wildlife sighting. The cars' occupants have gathered along the road with cameras pointing towards the forest, clamouring to snap a coveted photo of a moose. I came across such scenes almost daily throughout the duration of my fieldwork. Occasionally a park ranger is present, preventing people advancing too close to the animal, as well as engaging in conversation with tourists.

Strickland and Rutter (2002:6) suggest that while it is often assumed that such sightings are more likely in the Interior, in reality it is the Corridor that offers a higher likelihood of viewing the animals that have widely become representative of "wildlife." This trend is indicative of animals' adaptation to the presence of humans and human interference. Moose and other animals are attracted to the region along the highway, particularly in the late spring and early summer months, as salt used on the roads during winter trickles to ditches with the melting of snow and ice (Quinn 2002; Strickland and Rutter 2002:6; Wedeles 2009:290). Beyond the attraction to such areas due to anthropogenic factors, many nonhuman species have exhibited other behavioural changes as they have become habituated to the presence of humans and

vehicles. Many animals in the park, such as moose, remain unfazed by seemingly disruptive human activities, a contrast to populations living elsewhere that have not been subject to such activity and thus have not adapted accordingly (Wedeles 2009).

Thus I would argue that Algonquin Park has indeed produced a “staged authenticity,” not of humans, but of wildlife. Various species have altered natural behaviours to accommodate the inquisitive and invasive behaviour of tourists. In this way, wildlife has been objectified and exoticised. It is now a prime attraction of the park and a commodity to bring in business. Wildlife, it seems, is an important tool for economic gain. It has been managed, disrupted, and adapted to fit the desires and expectations of tourists, and in turn this adaptation has helped ensure the nonhumans’ conservation value.

Conclusions

There is diversity in the perception of the park by different publics, which results in part from the “staged authenticity” of the park’s wildlife. Further more, I argue that there is a discrepancy between perception and reality among the tourists regarding such issues as logging and “natural” or “typical” moose behaviour. This discrepancy is not necessarily negative; it may be beneficial to both the objectives of the park and the tenets of ecotourism. Algonquin Park is staged differently for its various publics in an effort to balance and benefit all facets of the park. Participants’ perspectives suggest that residents were well informed on the subjects of biodiversity and ecology in the park. In contrast, educating tourists on these matters, which may add little to the overall tourist experience, is a lower priority than providing gasoline and dining options. Other aspects of the park that may detract from its appeal to visitors, such as logging, are strategically concealed from non-local publics. Conversely, residents’ perception of the park as a source of livelihood is crucial to its conservation mandate. Thus, different versions of the

park are presented to and perceived by different publics (see Baker 2002). The park is presented in a manner that encompasses the aspects that are most appealing to a given public, and thus most beneficial to the various functions of the park. Their respective perceptions are a reflection of this construct.

Algonquin Park has, in this way, taken into account the perspectives of various publics, a goal that has been encouraged by many in the field of conservation (Brosius and Russell 2003; Escobar 1998, 2006; Haraway 1988; Hill 2002; Hutton et al. 2005). As a wilderness and nature sanctuary, Algonquin Park attracts tourism, thus garnering business and the contributing economically to surrounding area, part of the park's primary goal (Ontario Parks 1998:6). Further, engaging with the park as "nature", tourists articulated an interest the park's ecology and demonstrated a strong intent to be environmentally responsible. This contributes to the park's conservation and protection objectives (Ontario Parks 1998:6-7). Equally, as an economic resource by residents, it garners support for both tourism and forestry activities, thus supporting the goal of sustainable resource use (Ontario Parks 1998:6).

Many of these goals mirror the intents of ecotourism. From this standpoint, the perspectives of participants imply that the park is balancing the interests of various invested publics. Residents assessed park tourism to be critically important to local economies and to have positive impacts in their own lives. Tourists' accounts of their engagement with local businesses supported this perception. During interviews, many tourists also expressed a strong environmental ethic and a sense of environmental responsibility. They indicated a motivation to create minimal disruption to the park's ecology and concern over the potential impacts of their activities in the park. Understanding the park as synonymous with "nature," tourists were thus further fulfilling popular tenets of ecotourism: engagement with and enjoyment of nature, and an

environmental awareness and responsibility. Finally, tourism contributes to the success of the park and thus serves as a motivator for the continued protection and preservation of the biodiversity within it. Overall, it seems that ecotourism in Algonquin park has been successful on many accounts.

This study indicates that not only does the effectiveness and success of ecotourism vary on a case-by-case basis (Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Kruger 2005; Stronza and Gordillo 2008), but perspectives of ecotourism and assessments of its impacts may also vary between different stakeholders of a single project. Staging the park in particular ways produces different perspectives and understandings of the park, many of which were conducive to balancing the interests and expectations of different parties. Residents and tourists were presented with varying versions of the site, held different understandings of critical concepts, and had diverse investments in ecotourism.

Perceptions of ecotourism, it seems, vary greatly depending on one's role relative to it. Attempts to define the concept objectively and unanimously are thus likely to remain fruitless. It can perhaps best be defined as an imaginary, a tool that aims to affect the behaviour of those involved. The varied viewpoints of participants in this study prompted different attitudes and behaviours that were advantageous to different objectives, suggesting that ecotourism projects that account for diverse perspectives have the potential to affect behaviour in diverse ways. Perhaps therein lies its greatest potential as a tool for conservation.

Systems of Knowledge in Conservation

The findings of this work have implications not only for ecotourism in particular, but also more broadly, in discussions of the paradigms from which conservation efforts are approached. This study approached the subject matter from a paradigm based heavily on the knowledge

structures most commonly used in conservation biology. Concepts such as biodiversity and ecology have arisen from the predominant conservation discourse, which is strongly rooted in a Western mindset that places great value in science. Further, the manner in which such topics were discussed (clearly evident, for example, in questions regarding speciosity and the numeration of biodiversity) was particularly embedded within this paradigm.

Although the study was situated within a very particular framework, all participants indicated familiarity with this system of knowledge. They readily answered interview questions as they were presented, without questioning this approach or expressing divergent understandings of the categories of this research. Despite the division of participants into the categories of “tourists” and “residents,” the groups shared many of the broad conceptualisations that were underlying this research, not only with me as the researcher but also with one another. The paradigms through which they understood the subject diverged little from the Western and scientific systems applied widely in the field of conservation. The participants all held a similar sort of outlook, in line with conservation biology discourse.

However, even within this group of relatively homogeneous participants, who demonstrated familiarity with Western scientific knowledge structures, considerable variation emerged in many of their responses and knowledge. That such variation is apparent amongst individuals with largely parallel outlooks is significant from a conservation standpoint. This points to a need to examine the dominant knowledge systems that are applied, often at the exclusion of others. If perceptual variability is apparent amongst individuals in a common paradigm, a greater diversity is sure to exist between differing paradigms (e.g. those without a Western scientific background). Conservationists that recognise the perspectives, knowledge,

and opinions of diverse publics can better assess the way in which value systems are constructed. Such consideration holds the potential to improve the success of conservation.

Limitations to the Research

Though the paradigmatic similarities between my participants and myself illuminate findings that have practical implications beyond this study, they also, in other ways, limit the widespread applicability of this research. My participants and I were situated similarly with respect to the subject matter. As such, the framework and methods of this study were understood with relative ease and little hesitation from participants. However, the findings are necessarily comparable to other situations and projects in which there are diverse frameworks between researcher and participants. Researchers situated differently from their participants may better recognise how underlying knowledge systems are influencing perspectives, practices, and values.

Further, the type of data gleaned from a survey study such as this speaks only to particular aspect of a broader issue. The responses of participants encompass aspects of their perspectives, knowledge, and opinions that were consciously considered and expressed in the interview setting. These data thus offer valuable insight into participants' mindsets and conscious thought, but are not demonstrative of their behaviours and lived experiences. Thus, the findings must be read as a partial account of a broader subject matter.

Directions for Future Research

This project serves as a contribution towards a deeper understanding of the perspectives of various publics involved in Algonquin Park ecotourism, and it is also a step towards addressing the shortcomings in the field of conservation. Further research is needed to supplement the findings of this work and offer a fuller understanding of this topic, both because of the limitations of this project detailed above and because the findings of this study generated

additional research questions. Primarily, an examination of the manner in which such perspectives and mindsets are enacted through behaviour and lived experiences is needed. Studies that expand on survey and interview methods and capitalise on participant-observation would be valuable additions to the research.

Additionally, while this project examined the perspectives of two main groups of participants, tourists and residents, further investigation into these and other publics would be of benefit. The categories of “tourists” and “residents,” are not wholly homogeneous, and in-group variation warrants further examination that was beyond the scope of this study. Also, other possible participant categories that were not addressed here, such as park employees and individuals in governance positions, represent additional publics that are highly invested in the park and in ecotourism.

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Appendix A: Tourist Interview Questions

Demography

- How old are you?
- Where do you currently live (city, region and/or postal code)?
- Where did you grow up?
- What do you do for a living?
- Do you have a cottage?
 - If yes, where is it located?

Algonquin – General

- Do you know the origin and/or meaning of the word “Algonquin”?
- Before Algonquin Park was established in 1893, what do you think this land was used for?
- Do you know who owned this land, prior to the establishment of the park?
- Has anybody ever lived on this land (the area which is now the park)?
- What species (plant, animal, insect, etc.) do you think live in the park? (name as many as possible)
- Do you know if any of these species are endangered?
- In total, how many different species do you think are found within the park?
- Do you know if logging is permitted within the park?
 - If yes, how much of the total park area permits logging?
- Is hunting permitted in the park?
- There is an official Management Plan for the park, which specifies the goals of Algonquin Park, and the contributions that the park hopes to make. Do you know what the goals of the park are?
 - If not, what do you think the goals might be?
- Do you know how fees that you pay as a visitor are used by the park?***
- Have you had any engagement with local residents or businesses (Huntsville, Whitney, Dwight, etc.)?
 - If yes, what was the nature of this engagement/what type of business did you visit?
- What impact do you think tourists have on the local communities in the area?
 - Describe these impacts.
- What impact do you think tourists have on the ecology of the park?
 - Describe these impacts.
- Do you know of any measures put in place by the park to try to minimize the impact on wildlife/ecology?
- Do you think some tourist activities have greater impacts on ecology/wildlife than others?
 - Which activities do you think are the least disruptive?
 - Which activities do you think are the most disruptive?

Algonquin – Visit

- Why did you choose to visit this particular destination?
- How long is your visit to the park?

- *(If more than 1 day)* Where are you staying (i.e. developed campground, backcountry campground, accommodation outside the park, etc.)?
- Who are you travelling with on this trip?
- Have you been to Algonquin before?
 - If yes, how many times?
- Did you do any research into the park or the general area prior to your trip?***
- What sort of activities have you done (or plan to do) in the park?
- Which hiking trails/canoe routes have you taken or do you plan on taking?
- Have you or will you be renting any equipment (bicycles, canoes, etc.)?
 - *(If yes)* Where did you go to rent it?
- *(If respondent has taken trips to Algonquin in the past)* What sorts of activities did you engage in during past trips to the park?
- Have you visited any of the park's facilities (Visitor Centre, Logging Museum, Art Museum)?
- Have you accessed any other resources about the park (equipment rentals, educational materials, tours, etc.)?
- Have you gained any greater understanding of environmental issues, conservation or park wildlife from your experience in the park, or from park resources?
 - Similarly, have you gained any greater knowledge of the local communities?
- Did you see any wildlife (bears, moose, etc.) in the park?***
 - What sort of response did you have to these animals? (emotional response/general reaction)***

Ecotourism and conservation

- How would you rate your interest in conservation, environmental issues, sustainability, etc.?***
- How would you define “ecotourism”?
- How do you think “ecotourism” differs other types of tourism?
- As a visitor to the park, do you see yourself as an “ecotourist”?
- What other ecotourism sites have you been to?
 - What were your favourites?
- Where else would you like to go?
 - Why do you like these places?
- How would you define “sustainability”?
- How would you define “nature”?
- How would you define “biodiversity”?
 - What is the value of biodiversity?
- Is there a trade-off of benefits – that is, should you sacrifice some biodiversity to benefit local people or vice versa?

*** Questions added in later interviews

Appendix B: Resident Interview Questions

Demography

- How old are you?
- Where do you currently live?
- How long have you lived in the area?
- Where did you grow up?
- What do you do for a living?
- Do you have a cottage?
 - If yes, where is it located?

Algonquin

- Do you know the origin and/or meaning of the word “Algonquin”?
- Before Algonquin Park was established in 1893, what do you think this land was used for?
- Do you know who owned this land, prior to the establishment of the park?
- Has anybody ever lived on this land (the area which is now the park)?
- What species (plant, animal, insect etc.) do you think live in the park? (name as many as possible)
- Do you know if any of these species are endangered?
- In total, how many different species do you think are found within the park?
- Do you know if logging is permitted within the park?
 - If yes, how much of the total park area do you think is open to logging?
- Is hunting allowed in the park?
- There is an official Management Plan for the park, which specifies the goals of Algonquin Park, and the contributions that the park hopes to make. Do you know what the goals of the park are?
 - If not, what do you think the goals might be?
- The park charges fees for day use, camping, etc. Do you know how these fees are used for the park?***
- What impact do you think tourists have on the local communities in the area?
 - Describe these impacts.
- What impact do you think tourists have on the ecology of the park?
 - Describe these impacts.
- Do you know of any measures put in place by the park to try to minimize the impact on wildlife/ecology?
- Do you think some tourist activities have greater impacts on ecology/wildlife than others?
 - Which activities do you think are the least disruptive?
 - Which activities do you think are the most disruptive?
- Do you visit the park?
 - *If yes*, how frequently?
- *If yes*, what sorts of activities do you engage in?
- Have you ever visited any of the park’s facilities (Visitor Centre, Logging Museum, Art Centre)?

Ecotourism, conservation, and economy

- What are your general feelings or thoughts regarding the effect of the park and park tourism on your own life?
- What are the positive and negative impacts on your own livelihood from the tourists visiting Algonquin Park?
 - Does seasonality play a role? How so?***
- How important do you think park tourism is to the local economy as a whole?
- What areas/towns do you think are most benefited by park tourism?***
- What are the positive and negative impacts of tourism on the ecology of the park and the surrounding areas?
- How would you rate your interest in conservation, environmental issues, sustainability, etc.?***
- How would you define “ecotourism”?
- How do you think “ecotourism” differs other types of tourism?
- What are your feelings about ecotourism in the park? Concerns, expectations, etc.?
- Do you see any benefits or problems if tourism was to increase or to decrease (either to yourself or to the community)?
- Would any changes to the park or to the nature of tourism in the park improve the impact the park has on you personally?
- Have you engaged in ecotourism activities yourself?
 - ***If no***, is it of any interest to you?
 - ***If yes***, what were your favourite sites/experiences?
- How would you define “sustainability”?
- How would you define “nature”?
- How would you define “biodiversity”?
 - What is the value of biodiversity?
- Is there a trade-off of benefits – that is, should you sacrifice some biodiversity to benefit local people or vice versa?

*** Questions added in later interviews

Appendix C: Tourist Survey Questions

- How old are you?
- Where do you currently live?
- Where did you grow up?
- What do you do for a living?
- How long are you staying at Algonquin?
- Where are you staying while you are here?
- What activities are you engaging in at the park?
- What hiking trails/canoe routes have you taken or are you planning on taking?
- What species (plant, animal, insect, etc.) do you think live in the park?
- Are any of these species endangered?
- In total, how many species do you think are found in the park?
- Do you know if hunting is permitted in the park?
- Do you know if logging is permitted in the park?
 - If yes, how much of the park's area permits logging?
- Have you had any engagement with local residents or businesses (in Dwight, Huntsville, Whitney, or any other surrounding areas)?
 - What was the nature of this engagement (Gas? Restaurants? Shopping?)?
- What impact do you think tourism has on local communities?
 - Describe these impacts.
- What impact do you think tourism has on the ecology of the park?
 - Describe these impacts.
- How would you define "ecotourism"?
 - As a visitor to Algonquin, do you see yourself as an ecotourist?
- How would you define "sustainability"?
- How would you define "nature"?
- How would you define "biodiversity"?

Appendix D: Resident Survey Questions

- How old are you?
- Where do you currently live?
- How long have you lived in the area?
- Where did you grow up?
- What do you do for a living?
- What impact do you think tourism has on local communities?
 - Describe these impacts.
- What impact do you think tourism has on the ecology of the park?
 - Describe these impacts.
- What are the positive and negative impacts on your own livelihood from tourists visiting Algonquin Park?
- What species (plant, animal, insect, etc.) do you think live in the park?(name as many as possible)
- Are any of these species endangered?
- In total, how many different species do you think are found in the park?
- Do you know if hunting is permitted in the park?
- Do you know if logging is permitted in the park?
 - If yes, how much of the park's area permits logging?
- How would you define "ecotourism"?
- How would you define "sustainability"?
- How would you define "nature"?
- How would you define "biodiversity"?