

# Ahuriri & Ruataniwha Conservation Parks: Visitor Study 2006 - 2007

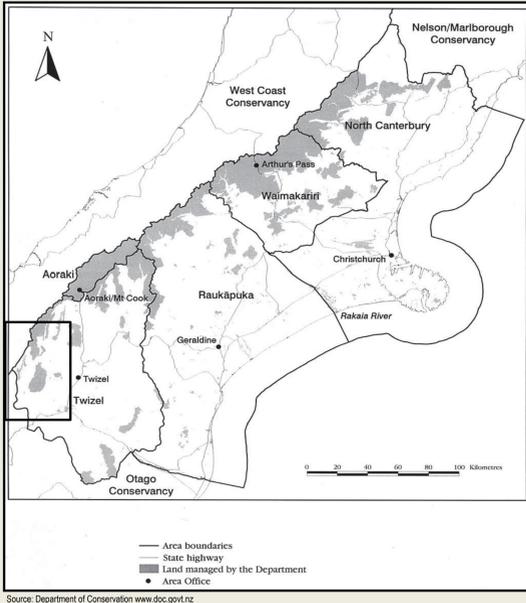
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The aim of this research was to gain insight into visitor use and experiences within the newly established Conservation Parks (Ahuriri and Ruataniwha) using visitor data from 2006-2007

**Methods:** A convenience sampling approach was used to distribute self-completion questionnaires to visitors over 4 summer months in each Conservation Park. Ahuriri response rate = 77% (n = 284); Ruataniwha response rate = 61% (n = 240)

## Location of Study Areas

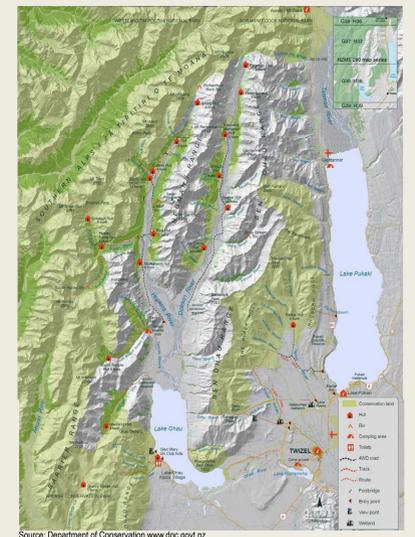


## Ahuriri Conservation Park



**Ahuriri Conservation Park.** The conservation and recreational values of the area have been managed by the Department of Conservation (based from Twizel Area Office) since late 2004. The Ahuriri Conservation Park (ACP) is a tussock valley system with braided river, beech forest, sub alpine and alpine ecosystems. The designation of the ACP is believed to have resulted in increased public use of the area.

## Ruataniwha Conservation Park



**Ruataniwha Conservation Park.** The Ruataniwha Conservation Park (RCP) was formally established in July 2006. The RCP contains more than 36,800 hectares of tussock land, wetlands, streams, braided rivers, beech forests, sub-alpine and alpine ecosystems located east of the Southern Alps in the Mackenzie Basin. Recreational activities in the area include walking, skiing, mountain biking, climbing, tramping, hunting, camping, fishing and horse trekking. Existing track systems are complemented by informal camp sites and twenty huts available for use.

# RESULTS

## Respondent Demographics

### Combined Ahuriri & Ruataniwha Data

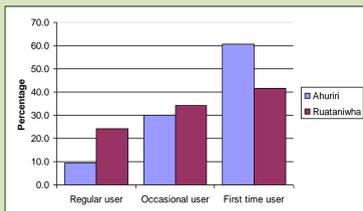
- Median Age: 45 – 55 yrs
- Gender: 43% female; 57% male
- Employment: 44% Full-time
- Nationality: 80% New Zealanders

### Origin of New Zealand Residence

- 15% North Island
- 53% South Island (excluding local area)
- 32% Local Area (including South Canterbury & North Otago)

## Outdoor Participation

- 52% first time users of ACP or RCP
- 32% occasional user
- 16% regular user



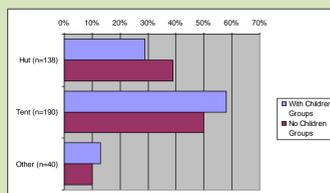
## Top 5 Motivations for Visiting each Conservation Park

Motivation (rank)	Ahuriri Conservation Park	% scoring "extremely important"	Ruataniwha Conservation Park	% scoring "extremely important"
1	Tramping	61%	Tramping	61%
2	To experience solitude	61%	To experience solitude	55%
3	Sightseeing/scenery	55%	Sightseeing/scenery	49%
4	Easy access to nature	41%	Easy access to nature	31%
5	Take children/family into outdoors	29%	Take children/ family into outdoors	30%

## Families & Children

Groups	Ahuriri		Ruataniwha		Total	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
With Children	43	15%	38	16%	81	16%
Without children	241	85%	195	84%	435	84%
Total	284	100%	233	100%	516	100%

### Children and Accommodation



- An analysis of children vs non-children groups (for both parks combined) revealed very little difference between the groups.
- Groups with children made more use of unofficial word of mouth information sources about the park, and tended to camp more frequently, but for shorter stays.

- Both groups with children and groups without children reported low levels of crowding and very high levels of satisfaction with their experience.



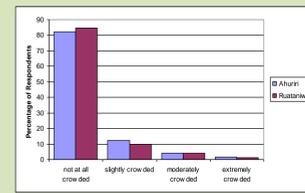
## Suggestions for Improvements (n)

Suggestion	Ahuriri	Ruataniwha	Combined
Information Provision	36	33	69
Facilities			
General	28	8	36
Access	3	20	23
Tracks	13	28	41
Tracks (mountain bikes)	n/a	11	11
4WD / Vehicle Issues	26	45	71
Huts	20	28	48
Toilets	12	14	26
Natural Resource Management (e.g. removing wild pines, rabbit control)	19	40	59

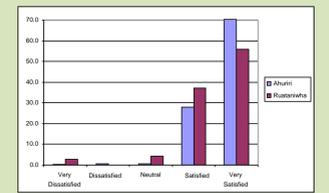


## Satisfaction in ACP & RCP

### Perception of Crowding



### Overall Satisfaction



## CONCLUSIONS

Overall visitor satisfaction was very high for both parks, although there was a higher percentage of "very satisfied" respondents in ACP than RCP. However, the findings do suggest some opportunities for enhancement. In particular, considering the use of the parks by groups with children, there may be an opportunity to provide more in the way of introductory materials with a child-focus, addressing the natural values and recreational activities in the area. This could expand to more active involvement with children in biking, tramping and camping e.g. overnight hut experience at ACP base hut or Shamrock Hut.

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