

Hollyford Track Visitor Survey 2006/07

OCTOBER 2008

SOUTHLAND CONSERVANCY



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

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Hollyford Track Visitor Survey 2006/07

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Executive Summary

This report outlines the findings of a survey of 153 overnight visitors to the Hollyford Track in Fiordland National Park. The survey was carried out in early 2007 and was part of a wider programme to assess the effects of aircraft activity on visitors at key sites on the Milford Aerodrome flight path.

Overall 30% of respondents were annoyed by hearing or seeing helicopters during their visit and 28% by fixed wing aircraft. Annoyance with both types of aircraft exceeded the 25% management threshold outlined in the Fiordland National Park Management Plan (DOC 2007). Jet boats (21%) were also a significant source of annoyance. Both aircraft (19% of respondents) and jet boats (29%) were important modes of access for visitors.

Survey participants were typically young, from overseas and were first time visitors to the Hollyford Track. Compared to other “high use” tracks in Fiordland, there were fewer first time trampers and a larger proportion of more experienced trampers were present. This use reflects the more difficult nature of some sections of the track and the diverse range of opportunities available in the area. One area of concern is that some inexperienced trampers are walking the Demon Trail section of the Hollyford Track.

The Hollyford Track was found to have very complex visitor flows. 37% of respondents did not travel beyond Lake Alabaster Hut while only 42% stayed at Martins Bay. The average length of stay in huts on the Hollyford Track was 3 nights, but, 30% of respondent spent only one night in huts on the track. 14% of respondents camped for at least one night during their visit.

The track was enjoyed by respondents for its natural values such as peace and quiet and scenery. The facilities and services on the track were also generally rated highly. There was little crowding evident and interactions with other visitors were generally positive.

The track appears to be being managed well and the Department is achieving the management outcomes described in the Fiordland National Park Management Plan.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a visitor survey carried out on the Hollyford Track in Fiordland National Park in early 2007. The survey was part of a broader programme to measure the effects of aircraft activity on visitors at key sites on the Milford Aerodrome flight path. Additional information was collected on visitors' use and satisfaction with facilities, perception of crowding and the extent to which jet boats, commercial use and other activities affected the visitor experience.

In the first section of this report, the setting, visitor use and management context of the Hollyford Track is described, and previous relevant research summarised. The survey method is detailed in section two and the survey results are presented in section three. The findings are discussed in section four, while recommendations for ongoing management and monitoring of the area are provided in the final section.

SETTING AND VISITOR USE

The Hollyford Track is located in the northern section of Fiordland National Park and follows the Hollyford River / Whakatipu Kā Tuka from the middle reaches of the Hollyford Valley to the Tasman Sea. It is bordered by the Central Darran Mountain range to the west and the Humboldt and Skippers ranges to the east (Figure 1).

The track begins at the Lower Hollyford Road end and meanders through lowland forest alongside the Hollyford River/ Whakatipu Kā Tuka, Lake Alabaster and Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai, finally reaching the Tasman Sea at Martins Bay. The track is valued for the diversity of landscapes encountered from the stunning granite peaks of the Central Darrans to the rugged and wild coastline.

The track passes through forest dominated by silver beech with kamahi, kahikatea, matai and rimu also present. Coprosmas, wineberry, fuchsia and pepperwood along with abundant ferns, mosses and lichens form a rich understory. Bird species present include tomtit, robin, brown creeper, bellbird, grey warbler, fantail, rifleman, tui, kereru and kaka. The rare pekapeka or native short-tail bat is present but not common.

New Zealand fur seals (kekeno) and fiordland crested penguins (tawaki) can be seen at Long Reef at Martins Bay and bottlenose dolphins regularly visit Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai.

In addition to its natural values the Hollyford Track traverses an area rich in human history. The Hollyford Valley has had a long history of human occupation dating back to the 17th century when Martins Bay was settled by Maori. The area provided easy access to food resources in the surrounding lakes, sea and forest, as well as providing access to other locations where pounamu (greenstone) was collected. Tradition has it that it was also an important location for canoe building. From the mid 1860's, after European settlement of the South Island, the valley was proposed as a route to provide trade access from the West Coast to Queenstown so that gold could be transported out and goods transported in from Australia. It was this that led James MacAndrew, Superintendent of the Otago Province, to suggest an assisted immigrant settlement at Martins Bay, which was named Jamestown in his honour. European settlements were established at Martins Bay and at Jamestown on the northern shore of Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai. These ventures were hampered by isolation and the harsh conditions and only one family, the MacKenzies, remained to farm cattle, which continued until the mid 1900's. Davey Gunn subsequently took up the cattle running and initiated the first guided tourist trips through the Hollyford. The gazettal of Fiordland National Park in 1952 and the formation of the Fiordland National Parks Board led to a period of development of recreation facilities in the 1960s, including huts along the Hollyford Track. Extensive sections of track were improved through 1980s 'work for the dole schemes' supervised by the Department of Lands and Survey. Today several pockets of private land including some private baches remain at Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai and Martins Bay - a remnant of the 1860s settlement attempt (R. Egerton pers. comm.).

The Hollyford Track is the only major tramping track in Fiordland that is able to be walked at any time of year, as the track remains low in the valley with no alpine passes to cross. Most visitors start at the road end and take up to 4 days to reach the coast. The track is maintained as an "easy tramping track" from the road end to the McKerrow Island track junction, and from the north end of Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai to Martins Bay Hut. The middle section, along the shore of Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai is known as the 'Demon Trail' and is maintained to the lower BCA (back country adventurer) standard which provides opportunities for those wanting a more challenging tramping experience. It includes a number of un-bridged river crossings and other rivers have 'three wire' crossings.

There are six Department of Conservation (DOC) huts available along the Hollyford Track. Hidden Falls Hut located 2-3 hours into the track at Hidden Falls Creek and Alabaster Hut situated on the shores of Lake Alabaster, are the two most popular huts. Three more huts are dotted around Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai; McKerrow Island Hut at the south end of the lake, Demon Trail Hut on the eastern shore and Hokuri Hut at the lake's northern end. The sixth hut, Martins Bay Hut is located on the coast at the north end of Martins Bay. Hidden Falls, Alabaster and Hokuri Huts have been recently replaced and upgraded while the construction of a new accommodation block and an extension to the living space of the existing facility is planned for Martins Bay Hut, in the summer of 2008/09.

Experienced and well equipped tramping parties can also undertake the Pyke-Big Bay Route which follows the coast from Martins Bay to Big Bay and returns to Lake Alabaster and the Hollyford Valley via the Pyke Valley. This route takes 4 days but trampers can be subject to significant delays during flood conditions. Two huts (Olivine and Big Bay Huts) are provided by the Department but trampers are advised to carry tents and to be well prepared as flooding occurs regularly and can make the track impassable for days at a time. The Hollyford Track and Pyke-Big Bay Route can be combined to form a larger 10 day tramp.

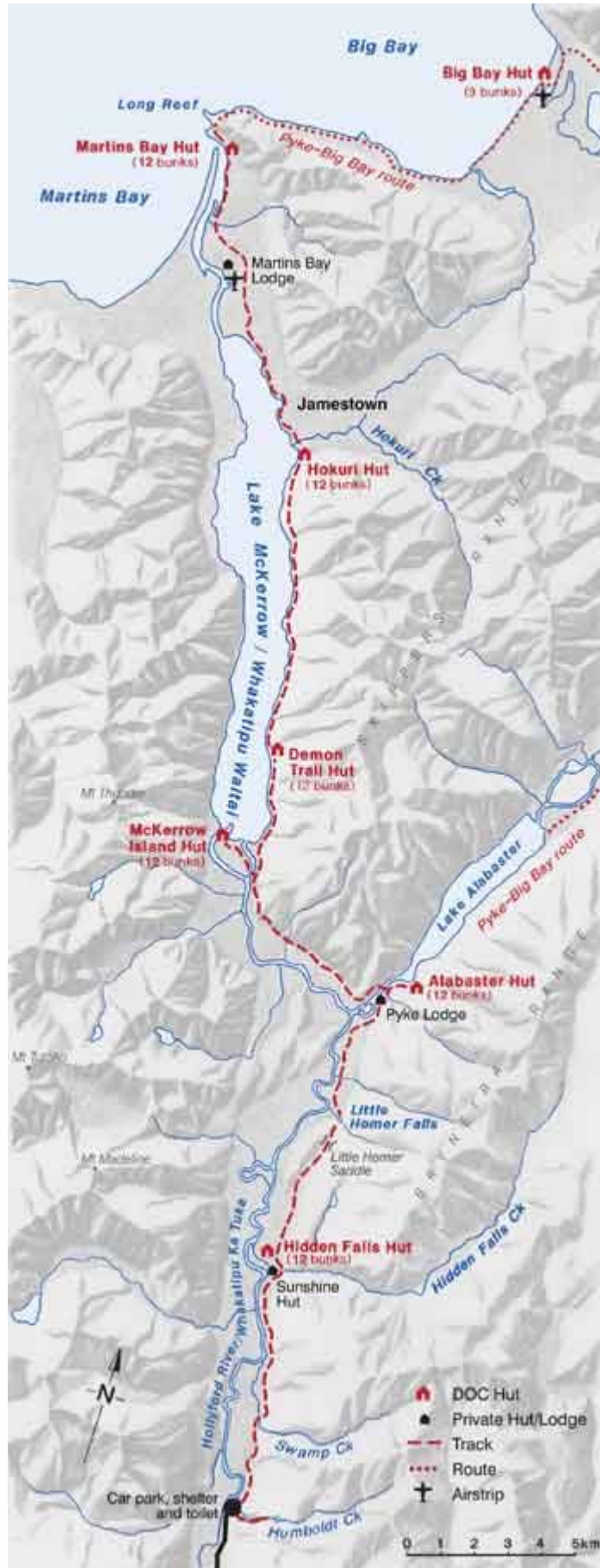
In addition to the DOC huts, private huts owned by Hollyford Valley Guided Walks (HVGW) are situated at Hidden Falls Creek (Sunshine Hut), Lake Alabaster (Pyke Lodge) and near Martins Bay (Martins Bay Lodge). HVGW are able to cater for up to 16 clients per day and operate from October to April. Their 3 day guided walk package includes a jet boat ride along Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai from the confluence of the Hollyford and Pyke Rivers to the head of the lake and finishes with a flight from Martins Bay to Milford Sound / Piopiotahi. The jet boat and flight options are also used by some independent visitors. Several other operators hold concessions for guided overnight walks along the Hollyford Track. These operators are permitted to use the DOC huts, with the exception of Martins Bay Hut, all year round and are allowed up to 50% of the bunk capacity. Two of these operators also offer overnight walks on the Pyke-Big Bay Route.

In addition to trampers, the Hollyford Track is used by a variety of other visitors. Guided and independent day walkers are common at the beginning of the track between the Hollyford Road end and Hidden Falls Hut. Currently nine operators hold concessions for day or short walks for this section of the track. For both day and overnight walks, the Fiordland National Park Management Plan (DOC 2007) limits operators on the Hollyford Track to one trip per day and a party size of no more than thirteen (including guides). Hunters regularly use the track in order to access different areas of the Hollyford and Pyke Valleys, particularly during the roar (in the months of March and April). Private jet boaters undertaking hunting or fishing trips use the rivers and lakes of the Hollyford and Pyke Valleys. Boats are often portaged by helicopter over a difficult section of the Hollyford River / Whakatipu Kā Tuka known as the Homer Rapids, where they are then able to reach Lakes Alabaster, McKerrow or Wilmot. Other users include climbers accessing the Central Darrans or the Olivine Wilderness Area and kayakers following the Hollyford River / Whakatipu Kā Tuka down to the coast.

VISITOR NUMBERS

Accurate visitor numbers are not available for the Hollyford Track. Unlike the Te Anau Great Walks there is no booking system and the levels of use only justify a single hut warden who is stationed on the track for a short period of time over summer and rotated between the various huts. Information provided by Hollyford Valley Guided Walks, the main commercial operator indicates that they cater for approximately 1000 clients per year (DOC 2007).

FIGURE 1: HOLLYFORD TRACK IN NORTHERN FIORDLAND



A track counter near the Hollyford Road end measures visitor numbers year round and this information is useful for tracking trends. Unfortunately it is difficult to calculate the exact number of visitors from the information that it provides. Although most visitors will walk in and out of the Hollyford Valley the same way and therefore cross the counter twice, visitors who fly into or out of Martins Bay will only cross the counter once and the exact number of visitors who fly is unknown. An analysis of the Martins Bay hut books showed that between 2003 and 2006 9% of recorded visitors departed by aircraft, however, the number who arrived by aircraft is unknown as most visitors did not state where they had arrived from or their mode of transport. The track counter is also close enough to the road end to count day visitors as well as overnight users of the track making it difficult to calculate the number of overnight users from track counter information alone. Table 1 below shows the level of activity recorded by the counter over last six seasons.

TABLE 1: VISITOR ACTIVITY RECORDED BY HOLLYFORD ROAD END TRACK COUNTER 2001/02 - 2006/07

SEASON	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
COUNTER ACTIVITY	2989	3056	3869	4230	3967	3516

A second counter was located further along the track at the Pyke Bridge, however, this counter was subject to repeated vandalism and malfunctions and seldom yielded reliable information. During the 2003/04 season the counter was crossed an estimated 1244 times which was less than a third of the activity recorded by the road end counter over the same period. In April 2008 a new counter was installed along the Demon Trail to gain a better understanding of use of this section of the track.

Hut books provide another useful source of information on the levels and type of visitor use but some caution is needed when interpreting the data. Figures from hut books underestimate the actual number of visitors as they rely on users voluntarily providing information. In most cases the rate of compliance is unknown. Despite this, hut books give an indication of trends in use over time and can be useful in bringing issues, such as over crowding, to the attention of management. Hut books provide a useful snapshot of visitor flows, the type of visitor using a site and the activities that are undertaken by visitors to an area. Hut books from the Hollyford show that most users are New Zealanders and that the main activity undertaken is tramping. Surprisingly, hunting does not feature strongly in hut book records perhaps because the activity is concentrated over only a short period of the year or because hunters are less likely to fill in hut books. Recorded usage of the huts ranges from an average of 930 visitors per year for Hidden Falls Hut to less than 100 per year for Olivine Hut. It is apparent that a large number of users only use the Hidden Falls and Lake Alabaster Huts which are the closest huts to the road end. There were also noticeable peaks in the usage of these facilities in the period immediately after the construction of the new huts. The long term trends in the numbers of recorded users and bednights are shown in Figures 2 and 3 below while additional information from hut books is summarised in Table 2.

FIGURE 2: TOTAL VISITORS RECORDED IN HUT BOOKS FOR HOLLYFORD TRACK AND PYKE-BIG BAY ROUTE HUTS 1998 - 2006

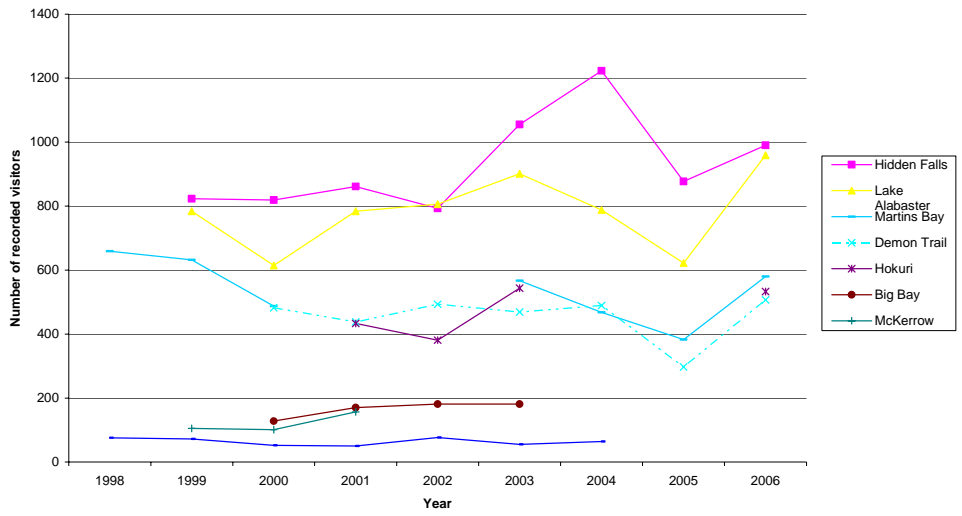


FIGURE 3: TOTAL BEDNIGHTS RECORDED IN HUT BOOKS FOR HOLLYFORD TRACK AND PYKE-BIG BAY ROUTE HUTS 1998 - 2006

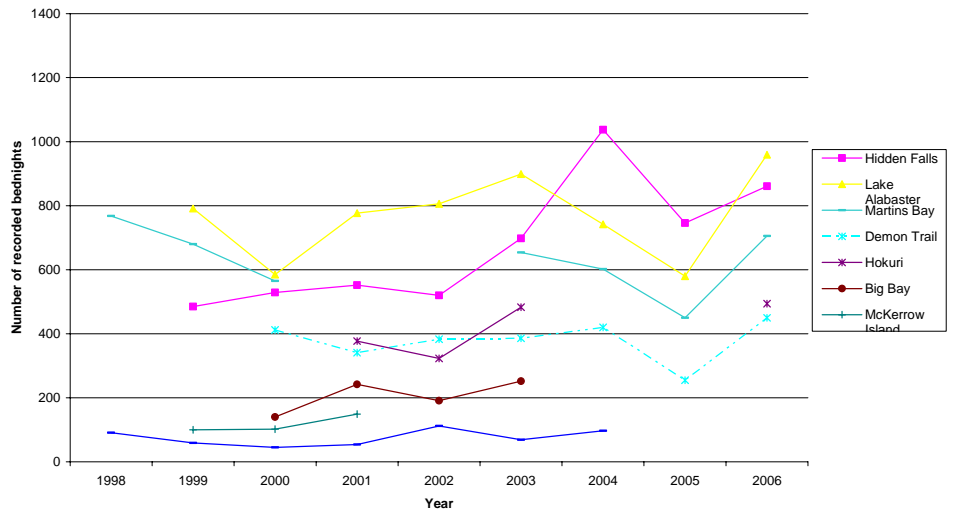


TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY RECORDED IN HOLLYFORD AND PYKE-BIG BAY HUT BOOKS

HUT	DATE	MAIN ACTIVITIES	MAIN NATIONALITIES
Hidden Falls	1999 - 2006	Tramping 72%	New Zealand 59% USA 7% Germany 6% Australia 5%
Lake Alabaster	1999 - 2006	Tramping 80%	New Zealand 57% Germany 9% USA 7% UK 5%
Martins Bay	2003 - 2006	Tramping 82%	New Zealand 56% Germany 9% Australia 6% USA 6%
Demon Trail	2000 - 2006	Tramping 75%	New Zealand 47% Germany 11% USA 8% UK 6% Netherlands 5%
Hokuri	2001 - 2003	Tramping 90%	New Zealand 46% Germany 12% USA 8% UK 7% Australia 6%
Big Bay Hut	1993 - 2003	Tramping 63% Whitebaiting 6% Hunting 6% Rest / relaxation 5%	New Zealand 76% Germany 7%
Olivine	1998 - 2004	Tramping 76% DOC work 5% Hunting 5%	New Zealand 70% Germany 8%
McKerrow Island	1999 - 2001	Tramping 90% Fishing 6%	New Zealand 66% Germany 10% Japan 6%

An additional source of information is provided by the Fish and Game National Angler Survey which provides a record of activity for this user group. It has recorded the amount of fishing that has been reported for the Hollyford and Pyke Rivers and other areas within these catchments for the 1994/1995 and 2000/2001 seasons (Table 3). This level of activity is relatively small in scale compared to more popular sites within Southland Conservancy such as the Maitai, Oreti and Waiau Rivers and Lake Te Anau which receive tens of thousands of angling days (an angling day is defined as “any effort on a given day on any water body, whether it is for half an hour or 8 hours.” (Fish & Game 2007)). Note also that some of the fishing on the Hollyford River could occur upstream of the track alongside the Hollyford or Milford Roads.

TABLE 3: ANGLER DAYS RECORDED BY THE FISH AND GAME NATIONAL ANGLER SURVEY (M. RODWAY PERS COMM.)

WATER WAY	1994/1995 "ANGLER DAYS"	2001/2002 "ANGLER DAYS"
Hollyford River	597	185
Pyke River	95	213
Lake Alabaster	25	42
Hidden Falls Creek	0	27
Lake McKerrow	364	441
Lake Wilmott	0	13

The long term outlook for visitor numbers on the Hollyford Track is uncertain. Official tourism forecasts for the Fiordland RTO (regional tourism organisation) predict a 24.5% increase in visitor numbers between 2007 and 2013 to just under 1.2 million international and domestic visits per annum (Ministry of Tourism 2008). It is not clear to what extent this increase will flow on to the Hollyford Track. Much of the projected increase is driven by increases in the numbers of international rather than domestic visitors, however, the Hollyford Track has a very high percentage of New Zealand visitors compared to other destinations in Fiordland. The number of domestic visits to the Fiordland region is only expected to increase by 1.6% between 2007 and 2013 (Ministry of Tourism 2008) compared to 28.6% for international visits. This suggests that the rate of increase for the Hollyford will be lower than that predicted for the Fiordland region as a whole.

Predictions are complicated further by increases in the price of oil and the cost of domestic and international travel. One response to high petrol prices and higher prices for air travel may be for people to travel less often or to seek recreation opportunities that are closer to home. Because the Hollyford Track is a long way from the country's main centres of population and New Zealand is likewise a long way from its main sources of international tourists the effect of oil prices on visitor numbers may be very pronounced.

The number of independent trampers using the Kepler and Routeburn Tracks has been declining since the 2003/04 season and this decrease is also reflected in the number of visitors recorded at the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre in Te Anau. Despite the increase predicted in official figures at national and regional level, it is likely that the number of visitors using the Hollyford Track will remain static or even decline over the next few years.

MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The Hollyford Track along with the Milford, Routeburn, Kepler and Hump Ridge Tracks is zoned as a 'High Use Track Corridor'. These five tracks collectively absorb the majority of the users of the Fiordland back country. They are managed primarily for relatively high levels of use by less experienced visitors who are seeking a moderately challenging but safe multi-day experience in a natural setting.

Track standards are usually higher than those found in remote or other back country locations and all of the tracks are well serviced by commercial transport operators who provide relatively easy access to the road ends. The huts on high use tracks are generally larger and more comfortable than those found at other back country locations. With the exception of the Kepler Track, the high use tracks all feature privately owned facilities for guided walkers which offer a higher standard of accommodation than DOC huts.

The Hollyford track attracts the lowest level of use of the five high use tracks and the huts are therefore smaller. They also lack the flush toilets, gas and dedicated hut wardens that are provided at huts on the Great Walks.

The Hollyford Track is managed with eight guiding objectives in mind.

- a) it offers a 'mountains to the sea' experience that can be walked all year round,
- b) the journey includes aspects of New Zealand's pioneering history,
- c) the visitor experience is more akin to a traditional backcountry setting,
- d) the walk is suitable as a training ground for backcountry experiences,
- e) opportunities for and conflict between tramping, hunting, fishing and jet boating is managed,
- f) facilities cater to the needs of backcountry visitors,
- g) a section of the track is retained (the Demon Trail) as a more remote experience for trampers seeking a challenge, and
- h) opportunities to connect with remote tramping opportunities in the Big Bay, Pyke and Olivine areas are available (DOC 2007).

The Hollyford High Use area is bordered by the Northern Remote Setting on both sides. This zone includes the areas surrounding Martins Bay and Lake Alabaster and includes part of the Pyke - Big Bay Route. The Department's management objectives for this area are different from those of the Hollyford Track and the zone is managed to protect the following key attributes;

- a) The remote experiences of Martins Bay and its surrounds;
- b) A place where marine mammals (seals and dolphins), and penguins are protected while being enjoyed by remoteness seekers;
- c) A place that is representative of the pioneering nature of Martins Bay;
- d) A place that provides remote tramping opportunities that can be accessed from the Hollyford Track and that also provides access to the Olivine Wilderness Area; and

- e) A unique opportunity to experience the coast and large lake systems without the presence of many people or an intrusive built environment.

The remainder of the Pyke - Big Bay route runs through the Pyke Forest Conservation Area which is managed separately from the two adjacent national parks under the Mainland Southland - West Otago Conservation Management Strategy (DOC 2000). This area is largely managed as a remote buffer zone for the Olivine Wilderness Area.

The main threats to the management values of the Hollyford are visitor conflict and the disturbance and reduction in natural quiet caused by aircraft and jet boats. Because the Hollyford Track and surrounding areas are used by such a wide range of visitors, some level of visitor conflict is inevitable. A particular area of conflict surrounds the activities of private recreational jet boaters who use the area for hunting and fishing trips. The Department has often received complaints about large groups travelling with multiple boats. These groups are able to bring in significantly greater supplies of food, equipment and alcohol, contributing to a sense of inequality with trampers. A minority of trampers are also uneasy with New Zealand's hunting culture and the presence of guns in DOC huts. The combination of guns and large amounts of alcohol can make other visitors feel unsafe (Kleinlangevelsloo 2005). This issue is not restricted to the Hollyford Valley, similar issues have been raised in other popular hunting areas such as Stewart Island (Reis 2007) and the South Coast Track (Harbrow 2007b). These groups do not reflect the behaviour of the majority of hunters or jet boats users but they can have a significant effect on the visitor experience and the overall perception of hunters when visitors encounter them.

Aircraft also have an impact on the experience on the Hollyford Track. Aircraft flying into and out of Milford Sound / Piopiotahi frequently fly over the track and the peak time of year for both aircraft activity and visitor use of the Hollyford area is over the summer months. During the period 1 January - 31 March 2007 an average of 82.5 aircraft movements (take offs and landings) were recorded each day at Milford Aerodrome by the airport control tower during its hours of operation (Harbrow 2007a) and peaks of more than 200 aircraft movements per day have been recorded (DOC 2007). It is not known exactly how much of this aircraft activity passes over the Hollyford Track. The track is also exposed to flights to and from other destinations within the park including the Hollyford and Martins Bay Airstrips and also to management flights.

Some management actions have been taken to address the noise issue. Although DOC has no jurisdiction over the airspace over protected areas, a detailed set of rules now governs commercial aircraft landings within Fiordland National Park. These rules will take effect over the coming years as concessions are renewed or new ones granted. At Milford Sound / Piopiotahi, the area of most concern, the number of regular landings has been capped at the levels that occurred in the year to 1 April 2005 and this number can only increase if monitoring shows that the effect on visitors is within acceptable limits. Aircraft operators' plans for managing noise and other effects of their activity on visitors will be a significant criterion that will be considered when allocating these concessions. In addition there is a mechanism for reducing the number of landings from 2011 onwards if these measures do not bring the effects within acceptable levels. Restrictions also apply to irregular and one-off landings at Milford Sound / Piopiotahi.

The remainder of Fiordland National Park has been split into four "air activity zones" for the purposes of managing aircraft landings. The permitted level of use is again capped at historic levels and each zone has a limit on the total number of landings. The zones are subdivided further with limits applying to individual catchments. There are also a number of "high use sites" dotted around the park which enable access to particular sites of interest and / or recognise historic use levels. These areas allow for a higher level of use than is permitted in the surrounding zone.

The Hollyford Track sits within the North Fiordland Air Activity Zone. With the exception of the high use sites, up to 24 helicopter landings are permitted per week within the wider zone which extends as far south as the Glaisnock Wilderness Area and the Milford Track, and no more than three landings per day are permitted in any one location. Sitting outside of these limits, four high use sites (Table 4) are designated within the Hollyford Valley. No landings are permitted on or in the immediate vicinity of the track itself.

TABLE 4: HIGH USE SITES FOR AIRCRAFT LANDINGS ON THE HOLLYFORD TRACK

SITE	PERMITTED LANDINGS
Homer Rapids	A combined total of 20 helicopter lifts of boats per week over the Little Homer Rapids only, split amongst three concessionaires. No more than 100 helicopters lifts per year.
Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai	Up to 20 floatplane landings per year split between two concessionaires.
Lake Alabaster	Up to 20 floatplane landings per year for one concessionaire. Landings are restricted to those seeking a floatplane experience and access to remote recreation opportunities.
Martins Bay	Up to 50 landings per year divided between one helicopter and one fixed wing concessionaire. Landings are restricted for access for remote recreation opportunities. Up to eight additional landings per day are permitted during "the roar" (15 March - 15 May) outside of this quota to enable increased access for hunters only.

Restrictions also apply to the Hollyford airstrip which is located in a front country area between Gunns Camp and the Hollyford Road end. Commercial activity at this airstrip is limited to eight landings per day split between two helicopter and two fixed wing operators.

Much of the Pyke - Big Bay Route is outside of Fiordland National Park and, therefore, aircraft use is governed by the Mainland Southland - West Otago Conservation Management Strategy (DOC 2000). Under this strategy, one off landings are permitted at the Alabaster strip in the Lower Pyke Valley but are restricted to one landing party with a maximum of eight people per day. It is also possible to land on the beach at Big Bay and on private land at both Big Bay and Martins Bay. These landings are outside of the Department's jurisdiction.

Managing the effects of jet boats is more challenging for the Department. There is a long history of private jet boat use in the Hollyford area. Public submissions on the Draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan in 2003 reflected this with little support for restrictions on this activity within national park. Despite this the plan imposes a noise limit of 77 dB(A) (L_{max}) for boats in most parts of Fiordland and there are restrictions on portaging boats by helicopter over the Homer Rapids. This section of the river is generally too dangerous to traverse by boat, and users instead portage their boats by helicopter or winch boats through the adjacent bush. The plan places a limit of 20 helicopter lifts of boats per week, and a total of 100 helicopter lifts per year on this section of the river. The Department is also seeking voluntary cooperation from boat users to use McKerrow Island Hut rather than Alabaster Hut as a means of reducing the annoyance caused by noise and large groups.

Commercial jet boat activity is also restricted with the Fiordland National Park Management Plan (DOC 2007) stipulating that only one commercial boating venture be able to operate on the Hollyford River / Whakatipu Kā Tuka, Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai and Lake Alabaster and that no more than one boat operates at a time. To protect the walking experience no commercial activity is permitted on the Hollyford River / Whakatipu Kā Tuka between the road end and the Pyke confluence although a boat ramp is provided at the Hollyford road end for non commercial users. Commercial activity on Lake Alabaster and the Pyke River is limited to three return trips per week for picking off and dropping off trampers and hunters only.

The Department anticipates that these measures will reduce or restrict the level of annoyance caused by boats and aircraft over the lifetime of the Fiordland National Park Management Plan.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Only one study has previously been carried out on the Hollyford Track. Kleinlangevelsloo (2005) surveyed 117 Hollyford Track visitors (independent and commercial) in March and April 2005. Interviews were also carried out with seven key informants who had a lengthy or regular association with the track or significant knowledge of the area. The study aimed to ascertain the extent to which jet boating activity impacted on other visitor's experiences of the Hollyford Track. A degree of annoyance at jet boat activity was indicated by 8% of survey respondents. The study found that generally, visitors had high levels of satisfaction with their experience on the Hollyford Track. The most satisfying aspects for respondents were the scenery and views, the track and hut conditions and the lack of crowding on the track. Some respondents mentioned interaction with hunters as a source of satisfaction.

Only 30% of respondents mentioned a specific aspect of their trip that they were dissatisfied with. The main sources of dissatisfaction included the HVGW tour being rushed, sandflies and weather.

Overall, the majority of respondents felt that hut facilities were the same or better than expected, the numbers of other people seen on the track was the same or less than expected, and the feeling of being in the wilderness and experience of hearing non-natural noise was the same as expected.

Most importantly, results from the visitor survey, and from discussions with key informants, revealed that interactions between trappers and jet boating and hunting parties could be both positive and negative. Many respondents commented on the unique chance to meet hunters and share in their supplies of meat from hunting, enjoy their company and the interesting element they brought to their trip. Others mentioned appreciating the use of jet boats for transport.

The results from the current study are discussed in the context of the earlier study by Kleinlangevelsloo (2005) and other studies on high use tracks within Southland Conservancy in section four of this report.

Methods

The survey was carried out over 19 days during January, February and March 2007. Respondents were approached by DOC staff at the end of their visit, at the Lower Hollyford Road end. Every visitor over the age of 15 was asked to fill in a self completion questionnaire (see Appendix 1) and return it onsite. Alternatively respondents were given the option of returning the form in a prepaid postal envelope. Where respondents had not returned to the car park by the end of the day the appropriate number of forms was left on their vehicle and these were later returned by post.

Surveying was carried out both on fine days, and during wet or overcast conditions. Surveyors were available to assist with any queries that respondents had but could not suggest answers to questions.

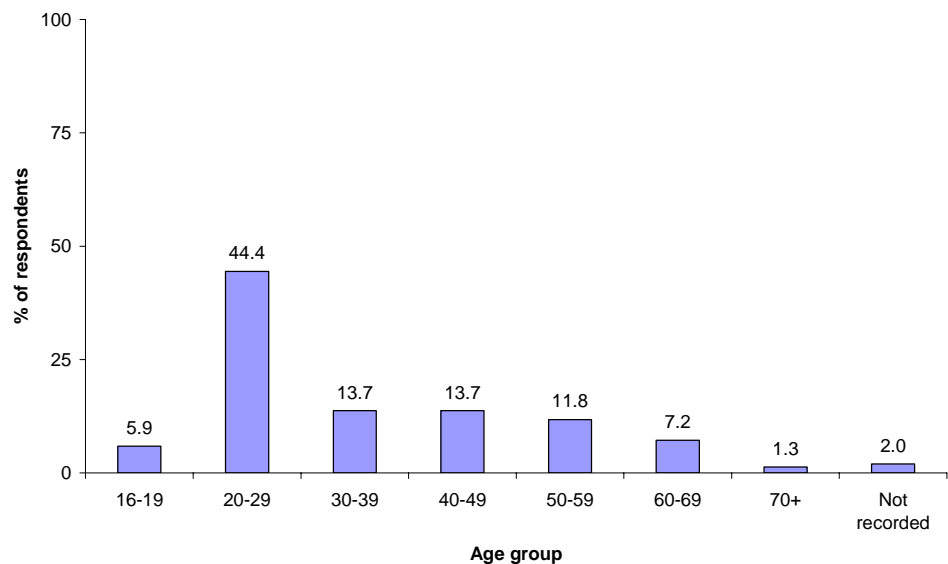
Input into the design of the survey was sought from a number of stakeholders and a number of changes were made to the design based on this consultation and following a pilot carried out in November 2006.

Results

A total of 239 surveys were distributed during the survey period and 153 completed surveys were returned giving an overall response rate of 64.0%. Postal returns were a significant contributor to the overall response rate, with 47% of the returns being returned by this method. The estimated maximum margin of error¹ for this survey is $\pm 7.9\%$. The results of the survey are summarised below.

DEMOGRAPHICS

FIGURE 4: AGE (N=153)



The most common age group was 20-29 with 44% of respondents, while a further 39% of respondents were distributed evenly across the next three age groups between 30 and 59 years of age (Figure 4). There were more male than female respondents (Figure 5).

New Zealanders were the most common nationality group among respondents (35%) followed by visitors from Germany (20%), and the USA (16%). The “Other Europe” category included respondents from The Netherlands, France, Sweden, Austria, Belgium and Italy (Figure 6).

¹ The margin of error refers to the potential error arising from sampling when making inferences about a larger population e.g. everyone who walks the Hollyford Track during the summer season. The margin of error does not account for non-sampling errors e.g. errors due to some survey respondents not completing questionnaires. Error figures should be viewed alongside other information such as response rates, the methodology and the survey instrument used. The figure given is a maximum margin of error and may be conservative. It has been calculated using the formula $(0.98 / \sqrt{\text{sample size}}) * 100$ and gives the maximum size for the 95% confidence interval for a simple random sample. However, the sampling procedures used were more complex and so the margin of error figures are to be regarded as indicative.

Almost three quarters of the New Zealand respondents came from the South Island and 22% of them (or 8% of all respondents) came from Southland (Figure 7).

FIGURE 5: GENDER (N=153)

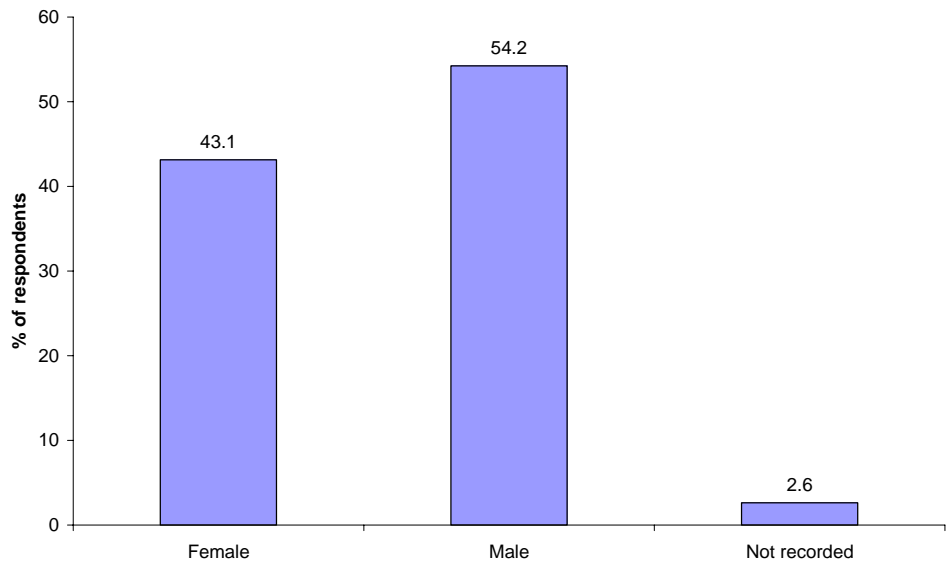


FIGURE 6: COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (N=153)

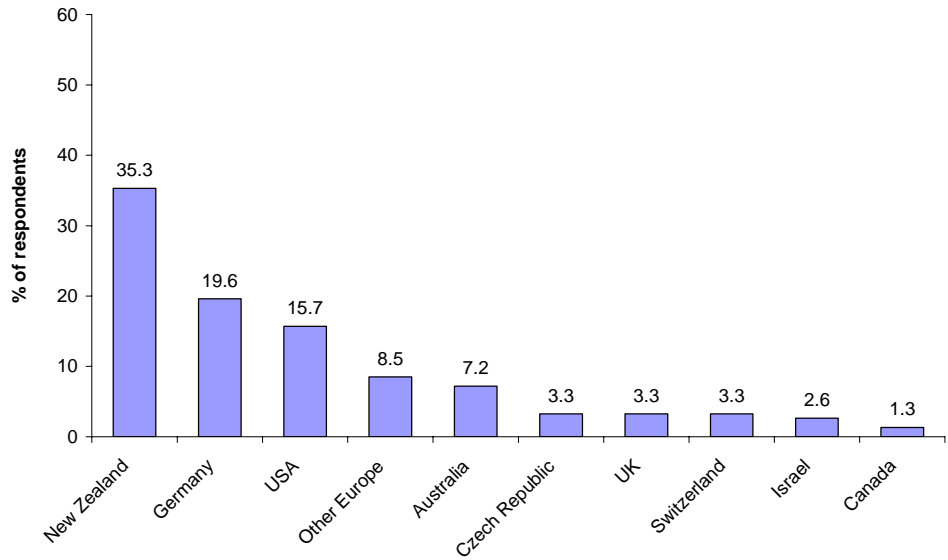
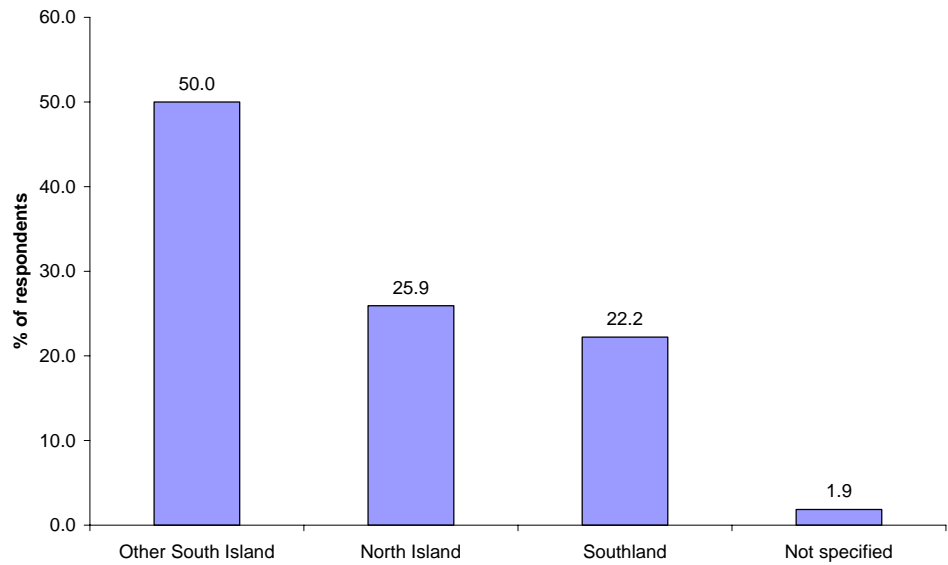
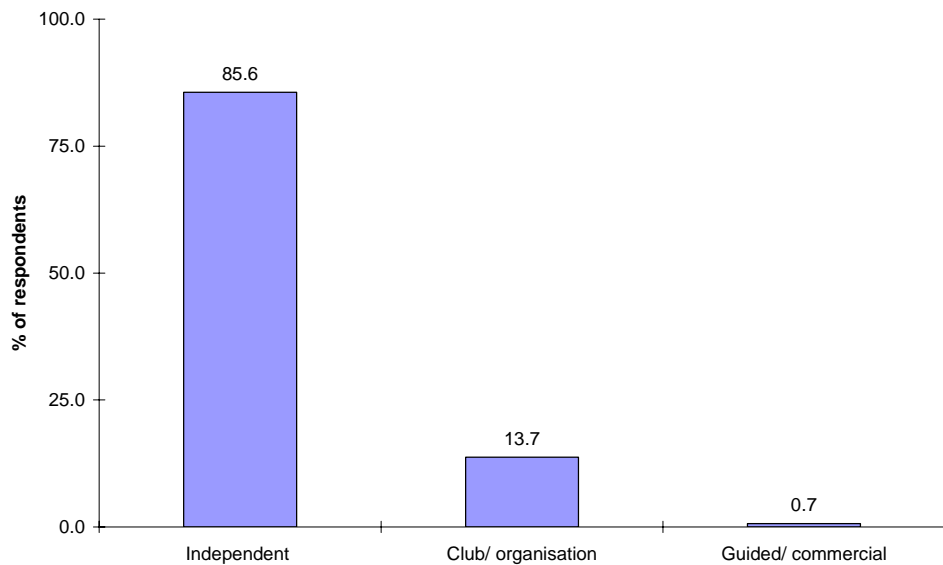


FIGURE 7: NEW ZEALAND RESPONDENTS' PLACE OF RESIDENCE (N=54)



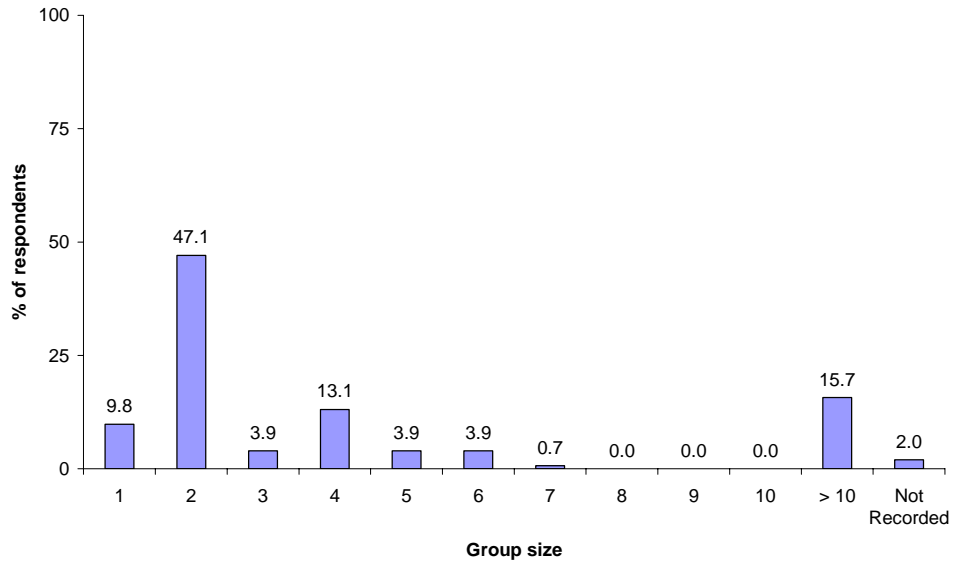
GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

FIGURE 8: VISITOR TYPE (N=153)



Most respondents (86%) were part of an independent group. 14% reported being part of a club or organisation and these respondents were all members of a university tramping club. Only 1% of respondents were part of a guided or commercial group, however, Hollyford Valley Guided Walks clients were not surveyed (Figure 8).

FIGURE 9: GROUP SIZE (N=153)

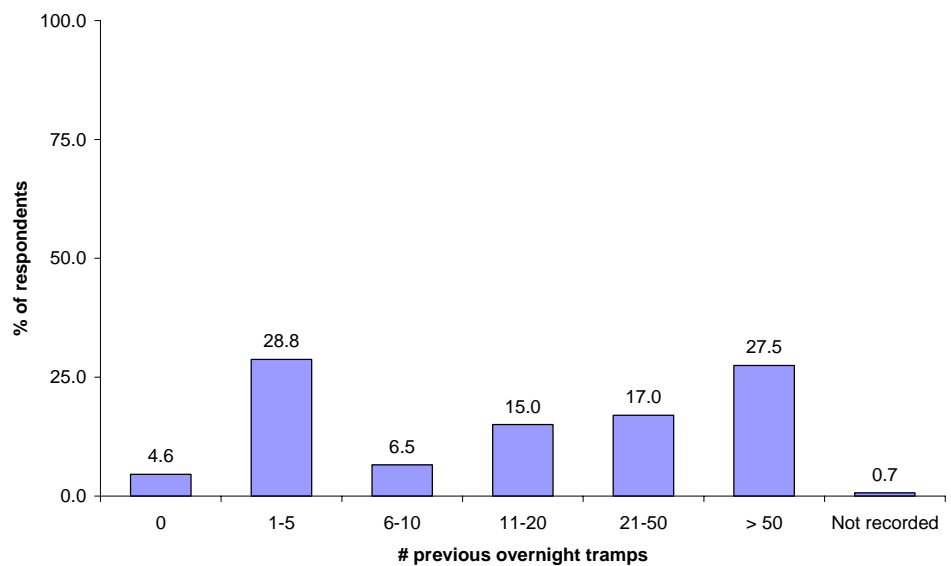


Respondents were asked to state the number of people who were in their group. The most common response was two (47% of respondents). 16% of respondents reported being in groups of more than 10 - this included respondents from the university group mentioned above who were travelling in two separate groups of twelve (Figure 9).

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

45% of respondents had completed more than 20 tramps or hikes in their lifetime and more than half of these respondents had completed over 50 such trips. The track also attracted relatively inexperienced trampers with 29% of respondents having completed between one and five previous tramps and 5% being first time trampers (Figure 10).

FIGURE 10: NUMBER OF PREVIOUS TRAMPING TRIPS (N=153)



Most respondents (86%) were visiting the area for the first time. Of the few who were repeat visitors, the number of previous visits ranged from one to twenty five. Most repeat visitors had made only one previous visit (Table 5).

TABLE 5: NUMBER OF PREVIOUS VISITS (N = 153)

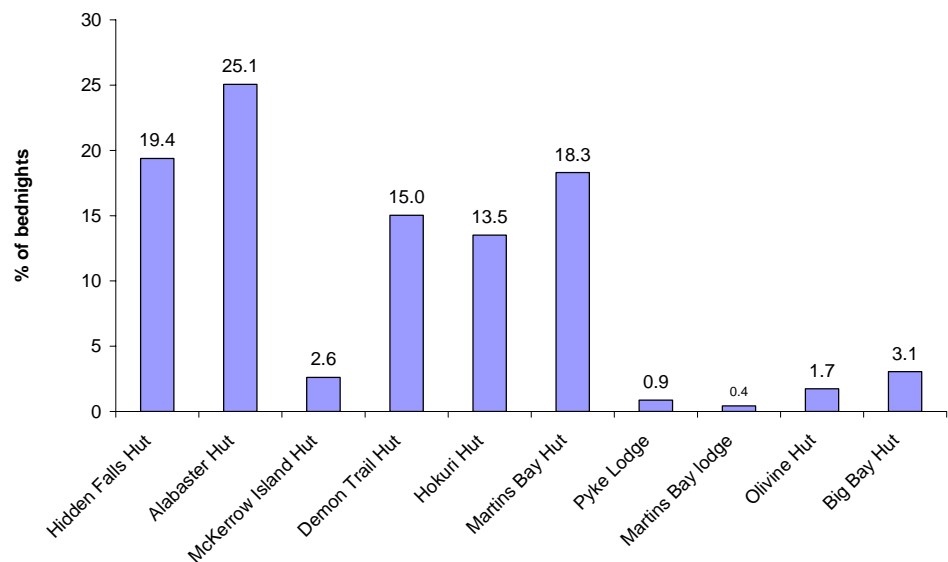
NUMBER OF PREVIOUS VISITS	0	1	2	3	4	5	>5	Other
% OF RESPONDENTS	85.6	8.5	1.3	1.3	1.3	0.7	0.7	0.7

New Zealanders were more likely to be repeat visitors than respondents from overseas.

VISIT CHARACTERISTICS

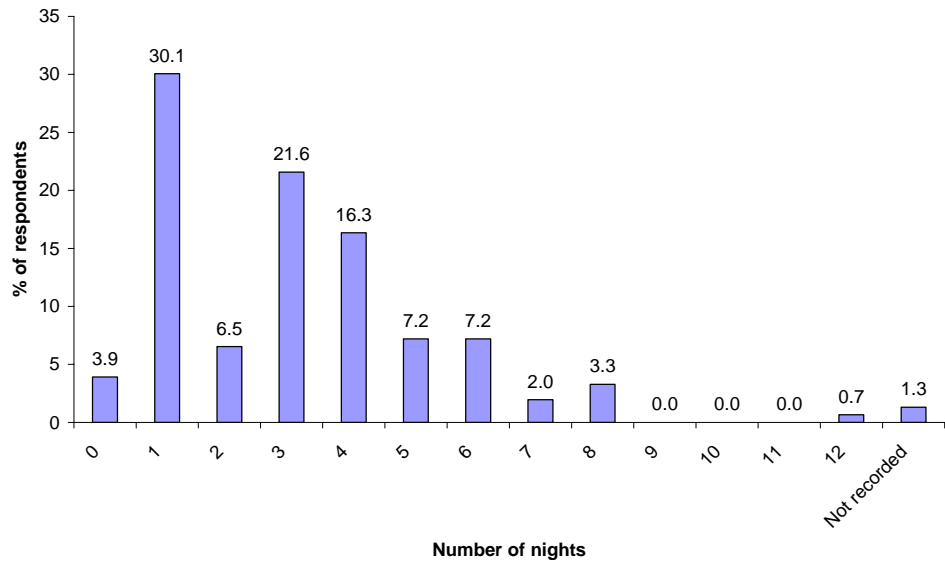
Survey respondents stayed at huts on the track for a total of 459 bednights. Alabaster Hut was the busiest hut with a quarter of the total bednights. Hidden Falls Hut and Martins Bay Hut each recorded 19 and 18 percent of the total bednights respectively while Demon Trail (15%) and Hokuri (14%) attracted slightly less use. The remaining huts all attracted fewer than 5% of the total bednights (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11: USE OF HUTS DURING SURVEY PERIOD (N=459)



The average length of stay in huts in the area was 3 nights while the maximum number recorded was 12. 4% of respondents did not stay in huts and instead choose to camp on every night of their visit. Overall, 14% of respondents camped at least 1 night during their visit using a wide variety of different sites. A large number of respondents (30%) stayed on the track for only 1 night, generally at either Alabaster or Hidden Falls Huts. The full range of responses is shown in Figure 12 below.

FIGURE 12: NUMBER OF NIGHTS SPENT IN HUTS ON THE HOLLYFORD TRACK (N=153)



Information about where respondents stayed and the modes of transport used can also be used to give an indication of visitor flows on the Hollyford Track. 37% of respondents used only the first section of the track and did not walk beyond Alabaster Hut. This included 22 respondents who stayed only at Hidden Falls Hut, 27 who only used Alabaster Hut, six who stayed at both Alabaster and Hidden Falls Huts but did not stay elsewhere and one respondent who camped near both huts but did not walk further along the track.

50% of respondents stayed at either Hokuri or Demon Trail Huts (including three who camped nearby) and were likely to have walked the Demon Trail. 29% of respondents said that they had travelled by jet boat but most of these respondents (38 out of 44) had also stayed in either Hokuri or Demon Trail huts, suggesting that most independent visitors who use the jet boat service use it in only one direction.

42% of respondents stayed at Martins Bay including two respondents who stayed at Martins Bay Lodge, one who stayed at a private hut and two who camped. 19% of respondents indicated that they had travelled by aircraft during their visit. Both figures are likely to be an underestimate as visitors who flew out of Martins Bay (including guided groups) were not surveyed.

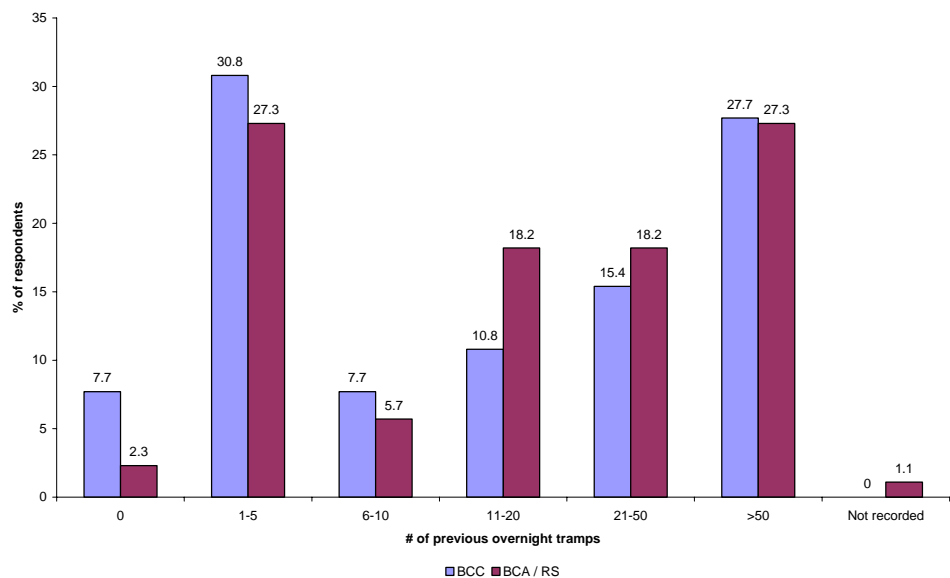
McKerrow Island Hut received little use during the survey period with only 12 respondents indicating that they had stayed in the hut. In addition two respondents camped at the hut and one camped off the track between Alabaster Hut and McKerrow Island Hut. This suggests that only 10% of respondents would have used this side branch of the main track. Similarly, few respondents walked the Pyke Big-Bay Route with only 13 (8%) staying at Big Bay Hut and nine (6%) continuing inland via Olivine Hut.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF USERS OF BCC AND BCA/RS TRACKS

Further analysis was carried out to see if the back country adventurer (BCA) and remoteness seeker (RS) standard sections of the track (Demon Trail, Pyke-Big Bay Route and the track to McKerrow Island Hut) were being used by the appropriate user group. 57% of respondents used the BCA / RS sections of track with most using the Demon Trail. Figure 13 below shows the number of previous tramps that had been undertaken by users of the BCA / RS tracks compared to those who used only the BCC sections of the Hollyford Track.

Within the BCA / RS group two respondents were first time trampers who had walked the Demon Trail. All 24 respondents in the next least experienced category (1-5 previous tramps) had also walked this section of track. Three of these respondents also walked to McKerrow Island Hut and one of the three stayed in the area for 10 nights and walked the Pyke-Big Bay Route.

FIGURE 13: PREVIOUS TRAMPING EXPERIENCE OF BCC (N = 65) AND BCA / RS (N = 87) RESPONDENTS



Although there were minor differences in the proportions of experienced and inexperienced visitors between the BCA / RS and BCC tracks, the differences were not statistically significant when the categories were condensed to compare respondents who had completed 0-5 previous tramps and those who had completed more than five previous tramps. The sample size was too small to do a separate analysis of Pyke-Big Bay Route users.

SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Respondents were asked to indicate on a seven point scale their opinion of six services and facilities – huts, hut wardens, maps and brochures, signs and information panels, toilets and tracks. A score of 1 meant they felt that aspect of their visit was “very poor” while a score of 7 meant they felt that it was “excellent”. An option to tick “did not see / use” was also provided.

Huts and tracks were highly regarded by respondents with average satisfactions of 6.0 and 6.2 respectively (Table 6). Over 80% of respondents gave a rating of 5, 6 or 7 for tracks and huts (Figure 14). Most respondents (63%) did not encounter a hut warden during their visit but satisfaction was high amongst the small number who did. Satisfaction with toilets, signs and information panels and maps and brochures was lower with between 16 and 24% of respondents being dissatisfied with these aspects of their visit.

Respondents were invited to give reasons if they had indicated dissatisfaction with any of the facilities and some respondents who were not dissatisfied chose to comment also. These comments are listed in Appendix 2. The most common issue raised was the lack of wall maps in huts. Some respondents were also concerned that the DOC maps were not detailed enough to give a confident estimate of where trampers were on the track each day, or that they were inaccurate. There was also a desire for more information regarding the difficult sections of track.

Issues relating to signage and information panels also received a number of comments, however, these comments were extremely varied and tended to be one-off in nature. Aside from a desire for better track marking on the sections of track around the Demon Trail and Martins Bay, there were no particular areas or signs where the number of comments indicated a need for management attention. The most common comment about toilets related to the number of sandflies. Other respondents complained about the smell, general lack of cleanliness and lack of toilet paper.

FIGURE 14: SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES AND SERVICES (N = 153)

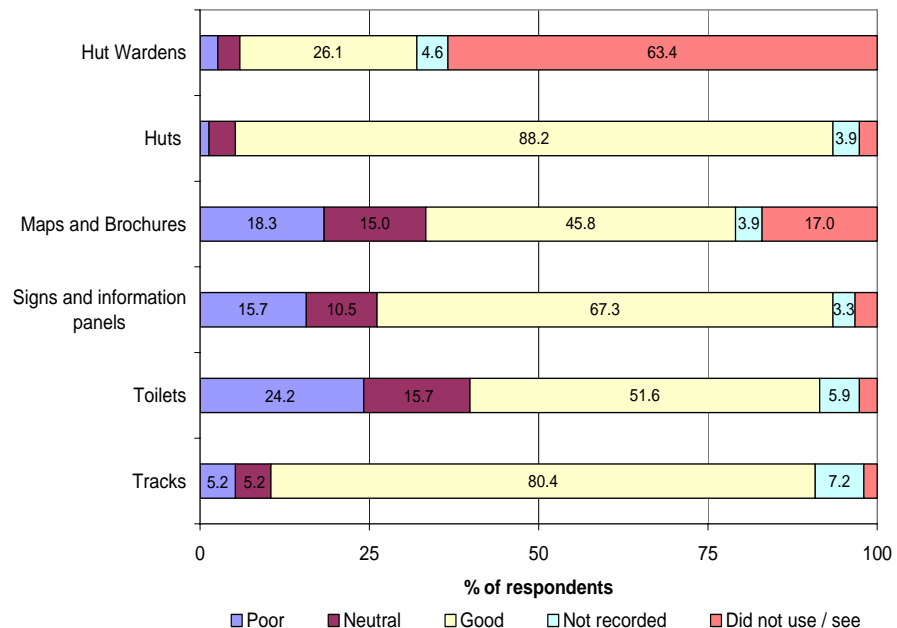


TABLE 6: MEAN SATISFACTION WITH FACILITIES

FACILITY	MEAN SATISFACTION
Huts	6.2
Hut wardens	5.8
Maps and brochures	4.8
Signs and information panels	5.2
Toilets	4.7
Tracks	6.0

A small number of comments were also received relating to tracks (e.g. difficulty, fallen trees, general maintenance), huts (e.g. water supplies, sandfly mesh) and hut wardens (their absence).

VISITOR LIKES AND DISLIKES

Respondents were asked two open ended questions; “What have you liked the most about your visit to the Hollyford Track?” and “What have you liked the least about your visit to the Hollyford Track?” Tables 7 and 8 below outline the likes and dislikes of visitors to the Hollyford Track. A list of all comments is attached in Appendix 2.

TABLE 7: MOST LIKED ASPECTS OF VISIT TO THE HOLLYFORD TRACK

COMMENT	% OF RESPONDENTS
Natural Values: Scenery	40.5
Waterfalls/ streams/ rivers/ water colour	16.3
Wildlife	14.4
Bush/ forest/ flora	14.4
"Nature"	12.4
Weather	8.5
Mountains	7.8
Lakes (scenery and swimming)	7.8
Coastline	5.9
Untouched environment	4.6
Facilities: Good huts	20.9
Good track/ bridges	17.6
Social Values: Not too many people	9.8
Isolation/ solitude	6.5
Enjoyed other people	5.9
Peace and quiet	5.2
Activity Value: Enjoyed walk	5.9
Challenge/adventure	5.9
Ease of walk	3.9
Jet boat ride	2.6
Flight	2.0
Camping	0.7
Miscellaneous: General	5.2
Getting away	2.0
Learn about NZ	2.0

Ninety six percent of respondents provided a comment for this question, with most respondents reporting multiple aspects that they enjoyed during their trip.

General comments about scenery and views were by far the most common response and were mentioned by 41% of respondents. Other respondents mentioned specific aspects of the natural environment such as waterfalls, streams and rivers, wildlife, forest or commented on nature.

The standard of the huts (21%) and tracks (18%) were also appreciated by respondents. Smaller numbers of respondents commented on the social experience, their activity or other aspects of their visit.

TABLE 8: LEAST LIKED ASPECTS OF VISIT TO THE HOLLYFORD TRACK

COMMENT	% OF RESPONDENTS
Natural Environment: Sandflies	43.1
Weather	6.5
Not enough views	3.9
Facilities: Difficult sections of track/ muddy tracks	5.9
Miscellaneous	5.2
Sink outside at Hokuri Hut	3.9
Track too developed	3.3
Toilets	3.3
Insufficient sandfly mesh	2.0
Lack of signage/ markers	2.0
Social Aspects: Overcrowded huts/large groups	2.6
Behaviour of others	2.6
Day visitors	2.6
Rubbish	1.3
Miscellaneous: General	10.5
Aircraft	3.9
Jet boats	2.6

91% of respondents indicated that there was something they disliked about their visit and 9% stated that they could think of nothing they disliked about their visit.

Sandflies were easily the most disliked aspect of the experience with 43% of respondents mentioning them. Weather and muddy or difficult sections of track were the only other aspects that were mentioned by more than 5% of respondents. A wide range of other issues were mentioned including aircraft, jet boats, other visitors and various aspects relating to facilities.

IMPORTANCE - PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Respondents were asked to indicate on a seven point scale how important five aspects of their visit were to them. The five aspects covered were natural peace and quiet, nature and scenery, solitude, rest and relaxation, and spending time with friends and family. A score of 1 meant that a particular aspect was “not at all important” while a score of 7 meant that it was “very important”.

All of the aspects tested were considered important by respondents with mean scores ranging from 4.5 to 6.7. The aspects that were valued the most by visitors were nature and scenery with a mean score of 6.7 and natural peace and quiet with 6.1. Over 70% of respondents gave nature and scenery a rating of 7 “very important” while almost 50% did so for natural peace and quiet.

TABLE 9: MEAN IMPORTANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCORES FOR VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

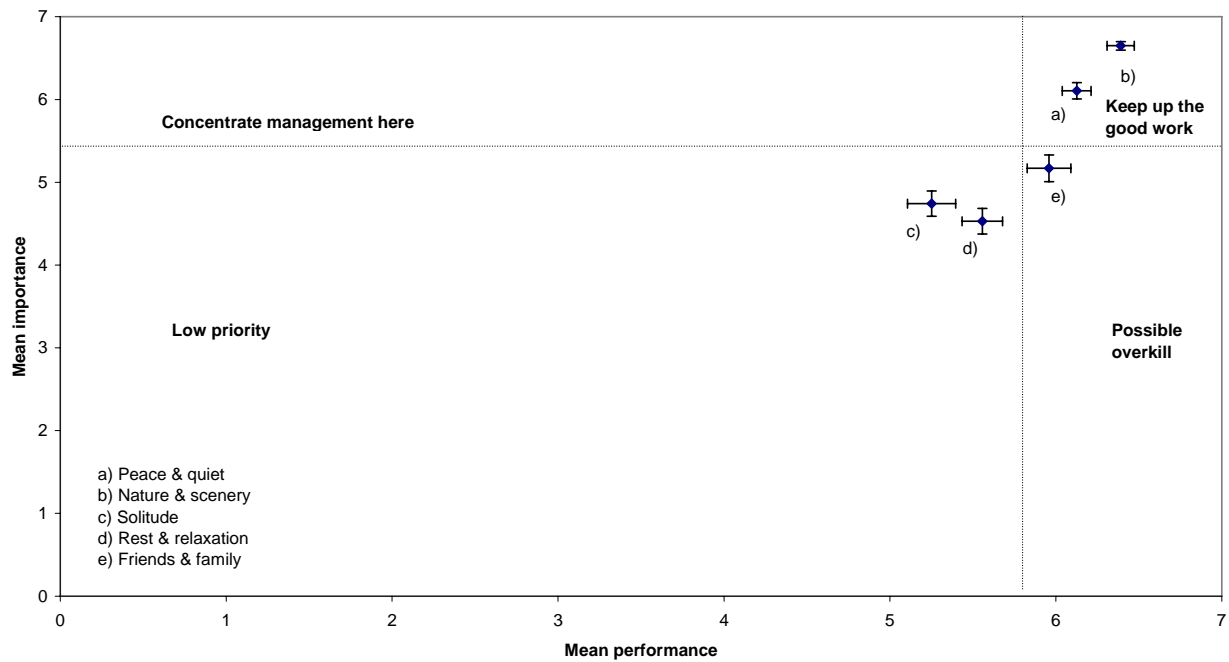
ATTRIBUTE	MEAN IMPORTANCE SCORE	MEAN PERFORMANCE SCORE
Natural peace and quiet	6.1	6.1
Nature and scenery	6.6	6.4
Solitude	4.7	5.3
Rest and relaxation	4.5	5.6
Spending time with friends and family	5.2	6.0

Respondents were also asked to indicate on a seven point scale how much they agreed or disagreed with five statements about their experience that related to the topics covered in the previous question. A score of 1 showed that the respondent did not experience that aspect during their visit, a score of 4 was neutral while a score of 7 indicated that the respondent had experienced that aspect and strongly agreed with the statement.

None of the five selected aspects of the experience had a mean score lower than 4. Mean scores ranged from 5.2 to 6.4, indicating that in general respondents were able to enjoy each of the five aspects of the Hollyford Track experience. Respondents agreed most strongly that they had been able to experience nature and scenery (6.4), and natural peace and quiet (6.1). However, 20% of respondents said that they had been unable to experience solitude.

The mean values from both questions (Table 9) were compared to ascertain the relationship between the importance respondents attached to aspects of the experience and their perceptions of their actual experience. This process is called Importance Performance Analysis (IPA). The results are plotted on an IPA matrix with the standard errors for each point indicated by crosshairs (Figure 15).

FIGURE 15: IMPORTANCE PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS FOR THE HOLLYFORD TRACK (N=153)



There are four possible outcomes of IPA:

1. Poor performance on attributes that are important to visitors. This result indicates that there is a need to focus management on those attributes
2. Poor performance on attributes that are not important to visitors. This result indicates that it is appropriate to leave things as they are.
3. Good performance on attributes that are not important visitors. This suggests that it is possible that too much management effort is going into this area, and,
4. Good performance on attributes that are important visitors. This is where the experience meets the expectations of visitors, and the appropriate management response is to try to maintain this position.

The importance/ performance matrix shows that overall the Department is meeting the needs of visitors with respect to the five aspects that were measured. The two most important aspects, nature and scenery and natural peace and quiet, were also the two aspects with the highest performance score indicating that visitors' expectations are being met or exceeded. Solitude and rest and relaxation were rated less highly by visitors but were also comparatively less important.

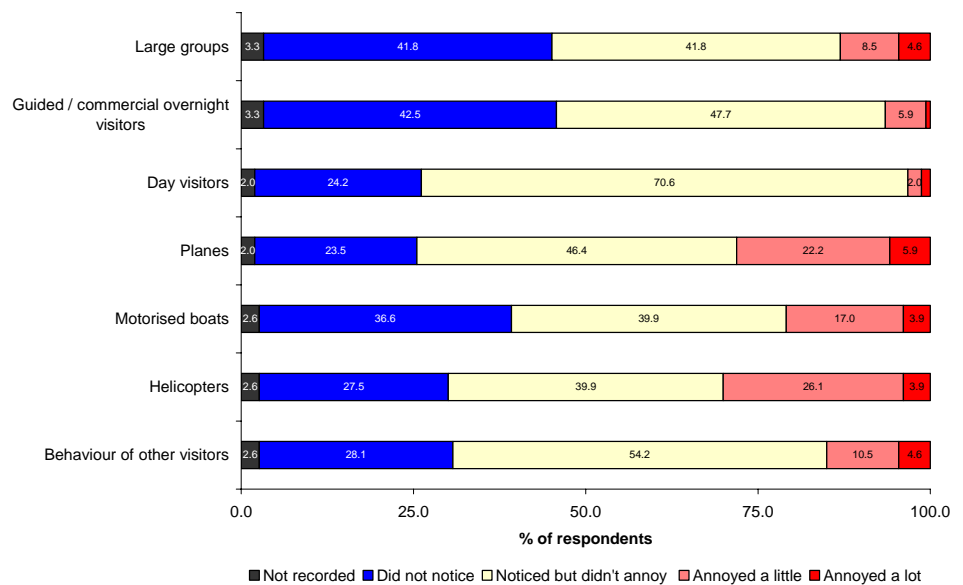
Respondents appeared to rate the social environment on the track highly even though it was not considered as important as other aspects of the experience. Usually when an aspect of the experience is in the "possible overkill" quadrant of the graph it indicates that it is receiving too much management effort. However, spending time with family and friends is not an aspect which is, or can be managed by the Department. Overall, the IPA analysis indicates that respondents had a generally positive experience and that the Department's level of management is appropriate.

EFFECT OF OTHER VISITORS

Visitors were asked to indicate on a four-point scale the degree to which the activities of other visitors affected their visit. Seven scenarios were tested; the behaviour of other visitors, hearing or seeing helicopters, hearing or seeing motorised boats, hearing or seeing planes, meeting day visitors, meeting guided / commercial overnight visitors and meeting large groups.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they did not notice the activity, noticed the activity but were not annoyed by it, noticed the activity and were annoyed a little by it, or noticed the activity and were annoyed a lot. Figure 16 below shows the results for each potential source of annoyance.

FIGURE 16: EFFECT OF OTHER ACTIVITIES ON THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE (N=153)



Most respondents noticed the activities in question. Three quarters of respondents noticed planes during their visit while just over half noticed commercial overnight visitors. The percentage of respondents who noticed each of the remaining five activities ranged between these two values.

The three motorised activities; helicopters (30% of respondents), planes (28%) and motorised boats (21%) caused the greatest level of annoyance and both types of aircraft exceeded the 25% annoyance threshold outlined in the Fiordland National Park Management Plan. The behaviour of other visitors (15%) and the presence of large groups (13%) caused concern to some visitors while guided overnight walkers (7%) and day walkers (3%) were only a minor source of annoyance.

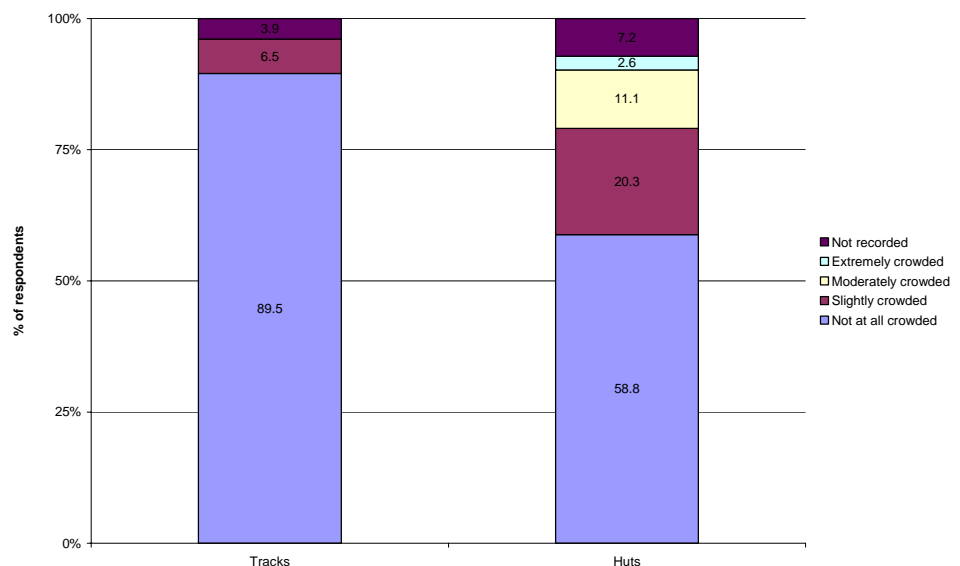
Respondents were able to provide a comment regarding the effects of other visitors on their trip. 69% did not provide a comment, or stated 'none' (comments supplied in Appendix 2). Of the remaining comments, half of the comments provided were positive and half negative. The small number of negative comments included disappointment at finding rubbish in huts, toilets, fireplaces or on the track (eight comments), meeting too many people during their trip (six comments), aircraft detracting from enjoyment (five comments) and day visitors being unaware of appropriate etiquette, or disrupting the sense of solitude (five comments). Some respondents mentioned enjoying the company of others on the track (five comments).

CROWDING ON THE HOLLYFORD TRACK

Respondents were asked two questions relating to crowding in the huts and on the track. They were asked to indicate a level of perceived crowding on a nine point scale ranging from not at all crowded to extremely crowded (Shelby, Vaske & Heberlein et. al. 1989). Scores of 3 or more indicated some level of crowding and were used for the crowding analysis. Scores of 2 or less indicated no crowding.

Levels of crowding were extremely low (Figure 17). 34% of respondents stated that they felt crowded in the huts with 14% stating that they were moderately to extremely crowded. Only 7% felt crowded on the tracks. Crowding on tracks and in the huts was well below the guideline management threshold of 50% suggested by Shelby et. al. (1989).

FIGURE 17: PERCEIVED CROWDING ON THE HOLLYFORD TRACK (N=153)



Respondents were given the opportunity to comment further (see Appendix 2), however, most chose not to provide a comment. Most of the negative comments regarding crowding centred on huts. Martins Bay Hut was mentioned eight times as being crowded, Alabaster Hut three times, and

Hidden Falls Hut twice. The track from the road end to Hidden Falls Hut was also mentioned as being crowded by two respondents. Some positive comments were provided also with respondents mentioning that people had been accommodating despite crowding, or that the reason they had not felt crowded was because they were part of a large group.

RECOMMENDATION TO OTHER VISITORS

95% of respondents said that they would recommend the Hollyford Track to others. Only 1% said they would not recommend the track and 3% did not provide a response to the question. When asked what they would tell people about the Hollyford Track, the comments were overwhelmingly positive. The comments are summarised in Table 10 below and listed in full in Appendix 2.

TABLE 10: RECOMMENDATIONS RESPONDENTS WOULD PASS ON TO OTHERS ABOUT THE HOLLYFORD TRACK.

COMMENT	% OF RESPONDENTS
Positive:	
Scenery/ landscapes /views	38.6
Easy/ well maintained track	28.8
Lakes/rivers/waterfalls	12.4
Forest/flora	11.8
Comfortable huts	11.8
"Amazing, fun wonderful" etc	9.2
Peace and quiet	7.8
Not crowded	7.8
Enjoyable walk	7.2
Wildlife	7.2
"Nature"	5.9
Ocean scenery	5.2
Mountain views	3.3
Isolation	3.3
Cost cheaper than Great Walks	2.0
Swingbridges	2.0
No steep climbs	2.0
Good beginners tramp	2.0
Equal/better than any Great Walk	2.0
Favourite NZ tramp	2.0
Negative:	
Lots of sandflies	8.5
Some sections of track difficult	7.2
Caution weather	4.6
Brochure inaccurate re. Demon Trail	2.6
Some sections not very scenic	2.0
Caution difficult section of track	1.3
General:	
Miscellaneous	15.0
Advice on tracks/huts	7.8
Challenging track	5.9
Transport options	3.9
Take more time	2.6

Views and scenery and the easy and well maintained track were the most frequent comments. Features of the natural environment such as the forest and lakes and rivers were also commonly mentioned, as was the high standard of huts.

The most commonly mentioned negative aspects were the number of sandflies, and caution regarding some sections of the track, mainly the Demon Trail.

Discussion

In this section the survey results are discussed in the context of an earlier survey on the Hollyford Track carried out by Kleinlangevelsloo (2005) and other surveys carried out on comparable multi day tracks.

The visitors who responded to this survey differed in some respects to those surveyed in 2005. Kleinlangevelsloo recorded more respondents in the 50-59 age group and slightly fewer in the 20-29 age group. The percentage of respondents who were from New Zealand was also significantly higher in the 2005 study with 64% of respondents being from New Zealand compared to only 35% in this survey.

The margin of error inherent in the relatively small sample sizes of 117 for the 2005 study and 153 for the current study may explain some of these differences, however, there were also differences in the sampling methodology between the two surveys. Kleinlangevelsloo's survey included clients of Hollyford Valley Guided Walks and Milford Helicopters. In addition to those handed out on site, questionnaires were distributed through a number of tramping and hunting clubs and included with hunting permits for the area for a month prior to the survey period. Her study also covered a slightly different time period. It was carried out in March and April and included more of the shoulder season, the start of the roar and the Easter holiday. It is likely that there would have been more New Zealanders and hunters and fewer international tourists present at this time of year. In contrast, the current study was carried out during the peak season and equally distributed across January, February and March.

Differences in the proportion of hunters and trampers along with the inclusion of guided walkers in the earlier survey would be likely to cause differences in the age distribution of respondents between the two surveys. Historically tramping has attracted greater numbers of young people while guided walking and hunting attract an older age group (Booth & Peebles 1995). More recent surveys confirm this trend. Reis (2007) surveyed hunters and trampers on Stewart Island and found that 71% of hunters were aged between 35 and 64 while for trampers the reverse was true with 69% of trampers being aged under 35. Ryan (1997) found that 62% of independent trampers on the Milford and Routeburn Tracks were aged under 35 compared to only 23% of guided walkers. A second survey on the Routeburn Track found that 47% of independent walkers were aged under 35 compared to only 14% of guided walkers (TRC 2007).

Age is also likely to be correlated with nationality as use of popular walks by overseas visitors is dominated by the young "backpacker" market. Ryan (1997) found that for each of the three Te Anau Great Walks between 80% and 93% of overseas independent trampers were in the 20-39 age group. Independent walkers from New Zealand had a more even age distribution with figures of between 49% and 63% recorded for the same age group. On the Kepler Track Snook (2005) found that 68% of overseas visitors were aged between 20 and

29 and 17% between 30 and 39 years of age. For New Zealanders, 40-49 and 50-59 were the most common age groups each comprising 24% of the sample.

Aside from showing the differences between New Zealand and overseas visitors, these studies highlight the fact that care needs to be taken when comparing surveys that have employed different sampling methodologies or that have been carried out at different times of the year.

The current study found that 54% of respondents were male compared to 43% who were female. This mirrors the earlier study by Kleinlangevelsoo (2005), and the findings of other studies on high use tracks in Southland (TRC 2007, Snook 2005, Ryan 1997, Cessford 1997a, 1998f-h, Walton 1995). It also reflects findings for New Zealand back country users generally (Kearsley et. al. 1998). In Southland females have been found to outnumber males in only two previous studies; among guided walkers on the Milford Track (Ryan 1997) and among users of the Hump Ridge Track (Harbrow 2007b). These results are unsurprising as men have historically been over represented in active outdoor pursuits whereas men and women are thought to have close to equal representation in activities which are guided (or more commercial) in nature (Booth & Peebles 1995).

Most respondents in this survey were from overseas, however, New Zealanders were the largest single nationality group making up 35% of respondents. This differs from the earlier survey probably for the reasons outlined above, and also differs from information recorded in hut books. This may be because overseas visitors are less likely to write in hut books or it may indicate that although overseas visitors dominate during the peak season, New Zealanders make up the majority of users when viewed over the whole year.

Southland's other high use tracks are generally dominated by overseas visitors. During the 2006/07 summer season between 28% and 32% of independent visitors on the Milford, Routeburn and Kepler Tracks were from New Zealand (DOC 2008). Previous studies on the Milford and Routeburn Tracks show that most guided walkers are also from overseas (TRC 2007, Ryan 1997). The majority of visitors to the Rakiura Track on Stewart Island are also from New Zealand. Between July 2006 and June 2007 29% of visitors who completed the full 3 day circuit were from overseas (DOC 2008). The Hump Ridge Track, however, differs from the Great Walks with New Zealanders making up the majority of users. During the 2002/03 - 2004/05 seasons 53% of visitors were from New Zealand (Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track pers. comm.) Aside from New Zealanders, visitors from Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel and Germany tend to be the most common users recorded on high use tracks in Southland.

Although a number of surveys have been carried out on the high use tracks, only two previous surveys have measured the extent of use by the local population. Kleinlangevelsoo (2005) found that 30% of respondents on the Hollyford Track were from Southland or Otago while Harbrow (2007b) found that 18% of respondents surveyed on the Hump Ridge Track were from Southland. The current study found fewer local visitors with only 7% of respondents being from Southland. This difference is likely to reflect the timing of the surveys with the current survey being carried out during the

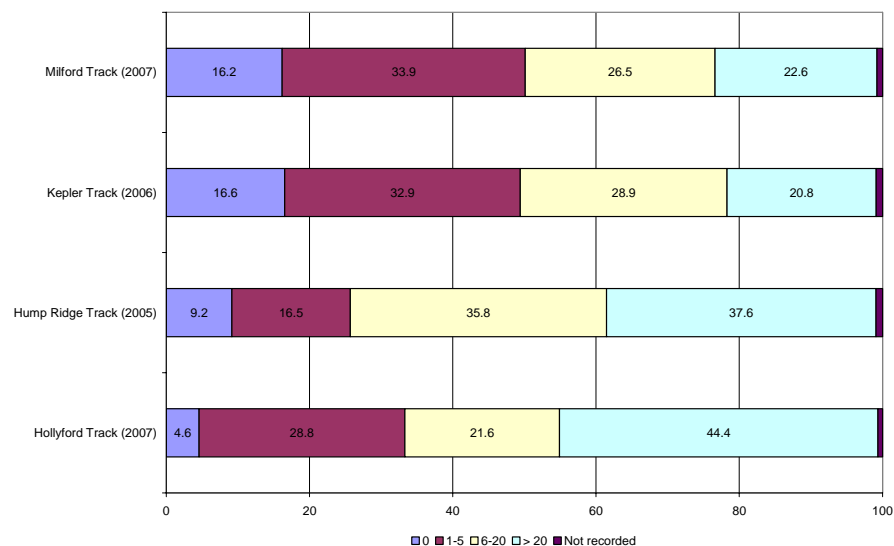
peak season and the previous surveys on the Hump Ridge and Hollyford Tracks being carried out during March and April.

Most respondents recorded in the current survey were independent visitors (86%), however, clients of Hollyford Valley Guided Walks were not surveyed. The most commonly reported group size was two. This is again in line with previous surveys on high use tracks. Two was the most common group size reported in recent surveys on the Routeburn (34% guided and independent walkers) and Hump Ridge (21%) tracks (Harbrow 2007b, TRC 2007). Cessford (1997 a, 1998g, h) recorded mean group sizes of 2.9 on the Kepler and Routeburn tracks and 3.2 on the Rakiura Track.

86% of respondents in this survey were first time visitors to the Hollyford Track. This is similar to recent figures reported for the Hump Ridge (84%, Harbrow 2007b) and Routeburn Tracks (86% TRC 2007) but lower than the 94% recorded by Walton (1995) on the Kepler Track during the 1994/1995 season. These figures are likely to be strongly influenced by the relative numbers of overseas and New Zealand visitors and by the extent of use by the local community as visitors from overseas and, to a lesser extent, elsewhere in New Zealand are less likely to have had the opportunity to walk the track previously.

Information provided by respondents about their previous tramping experience suggests that the Hollyford Track attracts fewer less experienced trampers than the Kepler¹ and Milford² Tracks. The range of users was most similar to those on the Hump Ridge Track (Harbrow 2007b, TRC 2007 & unpublished data). Figure 18, below, compares the levels of previous tramping experience reported by respondents on recent surveys on Southland's high use tracks.

FIGURE 18: PREVIOUS TRAMPING EXPERIENCE OF USERS OF SOUTHLAND HIGH USE TRACKS (SOURCE: HARBROW 2007B AND UNPUBLISHED DATA)



¹ 447 independent overnight walkers surveyed 14 – 23 Jan 2006.

² 389 independent overnight walkers surveyed over 12 days between 10 Jan & 17 Mar 2007.

The Hollyford Track and other “Back Country Comfort Seeker” tracks are managed to provide opportunities for less experienced trampers. The Fiordland National Park Management Plan (DOC 2007) stresses the importance of the Hollyford Track as a “training ground for back country experiences.” The survey results suggest that this is indeed the case.

There were still a large number of more experienced users (44% of respondents) which is expected given the length of the full walk to Martins Bay, the attraction of the more difficult Demon Trail and Pyke-Big Bay Route and the hunting opportunity. An area of concern however, is the use of the Demon Trail by relatively inexperienced, and occasionally first time, trampers.

Much of the Hollyford Track is managed as a BCC (Back Country Comfort Seeker track) catering for visitors wanting a relatively safe, comfortable, low risk tramping experience. The Demon Trail, however, is a BCA (Back Country Adventurer) track. It is managed for visitors who have moderate to high levels of tramping experience, who are seeking challenge and a sense of freedom, while accepting a degree of risk and discomfort (DOC 1996). Aside from the Demon Trail being physically more demanding than other sections of the Hollyford Track, aspects of the track such as track marking, track drainage, the walking surface and the provision of bridges are managed quite differently. While being perfectly appropriate to the user group who the track is managed for, the lack of bridges or the presence of three wire crossings instead of solid timber bridges presents a particular risk to inexperienced visitors. In the absence of any plans to upgrade the Demon Trail to BCC standard it is important that the Department continues to provide appropriate information to visitors to enable them to choose an option (i.e. taking the jet boat or walking the Demon Trail) that fits their level of tramping experience.

The Hollyford Track differs from the other high use tracks in Southland as most visitors on these tracks tend to be completing a trip of a set duration with all visitors following much the same itinerary. It is clear from the survey results that the Hollyford Track caters for a wide variety of experiences. In this survey the average length of stay in huts on the Hollyford Track was 3 nights, however, 30% of respondents were spending only one night in huts on the Hollyford Track and 37% did not walk beyond Alabaster Hut. This indicates that many respondents used the track for short overnight or weekend trips. Longer visits of up to 12 nights were also recorded. These responses included trampers undertaking the Pyke-Big Bay Route (6-8% of respondents) and groups of hunters. Most respondents were not necessarily walking the full track with Martins Bay as the end destination. In fact only 42% of respondents stayed at Martins Bay.

The use of and importance of motorised transport on the Hollyford Track also makes it distinct from the other high use tracks. Motorised transport is an important part of the experience on both the Milford (boat) and Hump Ridge (4 wheel drive) tracks as access to the start of the track is otherwise difficult. However, the Hollyford is the only high use track that offers motorised transport during the walk. In this survey 29% of respondents indicated that they had travelled by jet boat during their visit.

Although there are frequent service flights by helicopters on the high use tracks in Fiordland visitors do not generally access these tracks by aircraft. In this survey 19% of respondents stated that they had travelled by aircraft. This figure is likely to be an underestimate as some visitors would have departed Martins Bay by aircraft and therefore would not have been surveyed. The Martins Bay hut books from 2003 - 2006 show that 9% of recorded visitors departed by aircraft. Based on the visitor flows found in this survey that would equate to approximately 5% of the independent overnight walkers who use the Hollyford Track. In addition clients of Hollyford Valley Guided Walks typically travel by jet boat along Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai and fly out of Martins Bay.

Aircraft and jet boat access along with overflights from aircraft using Milford Aerodrome and other locations within the national park have the potential to cause unwanted noise and to diminish other users' feeling of solitude and peace and quiet. Aircraft are of greater concern to the Department than boats because they can affect a wider area of the park (often including remote and wilderness areas) and have been the subject of more complaints and submissions from the public. Noise from jet boats is also easier to control as vessels that are operating within the internal waters of the park fall within Department's jurisdiction. Problems can occur when the noise crosses park boundaries. In a survey carried out in Mount Aspiring National Park in 1997/98 22% of respondents surveyed on the Lake Sylvan and Dart Tracks were annoyed by jet boats on the adjacent Dart River (Graham 1998) however the Department's subsequent involvement in a case taken to the Environment Court (Kemp GR and EE v Queenstown Lakes District Council (1999) 5 NZED 123) was unsuccessful in preventing further growth in jet boat activity on the river.

In this survey 21% of respondents reported being annoyed to some degree by motorised boats. If the significance of the impact was measured by the same standard that is used for aircraft, this value would be just below the acceptability threshold. Over time it is expected that the provisions of the Fiordland National Park Management Plan (DOC 2007) will reduce the level of impact as they come into force. It is recommended however that the Department continue to monitor the effect of jet boats on visitors to the Hollyford Track.

Some of the findings of this survey are not consistent with those of Kleinlangevelsloo (2005). The level of annoyance with motorised boats recorded in this survey is much higher than the 8% that she reported but this is likely to be because her sample included guided walkers who would themselves have travelled by boat rather than due to any increase in jet boat activity. In the current survey 29% of respondents had travelled by jet boat.

Of greater concern is the degree of annoyance with aircraft. 30% of respondents were annoyed by helicopters and 28% by planes during their visit. This level exceeds the 25% management threshold outlined in the Fiordland National Park Management Plan (DOC 2007).

TABLE 11: LEVEL OF ANNOYANCE WITH AIRCRAFT, SIX SURVEY SITES WITHIN FIORDLAND FOR 2006/07 (FROM HARBROW (2007A)).

LOCATION	% ANNOYED BY PLANES	% ANNOYED BY HELICOPTERS	SAMPLE SIZE
Homer Hut	69.5	67.8	59
Gertrude Valley	30.2	36.7	199
Hollyford Track	28.1	30.1	153
Milford Foreshore	26.8	28.0	671
Key Summit	14.0	14.7	463
Milford Track;			389
Glade- Mintaro	15.4	23.4	
Mintaro- Dumpling	19.5	25.4	
Dumpling- Sandfly	17.2	22.4	

Results from this survey and surveys carried out concurrently at five other sites in Fiordland National Park during early 2007 (see Table 11 above), indicate that annoyance with aircraft remains a significant problem, and that ongoing management action is required to preserve the visitor experience.

Options for reducing the effect of aircraft activity on visitors to Fiordland include controlling aircraft activity at Milford Aerodrome and other locations on public conservation land, voluntary changes to flight paths or the way that aircraft are flown and adoption of quieter aircraft. These options are among those included in the provisions of the Fiordland National Park Management Plan (DOC 2007) and more recently in measures proposed by aircraft operators who have applied for concessions to operate at Milford Sound / Piopiotahi. It is anticipated that these measures will prevent the problem with aircraft overflights from getting any worse and will in time result in less annoyance to visitors on the ground. After aircraft and jet boats, the behaviour of other visitors was the next greatest source of annoyance among the seven options presented with 15% of respondents indicating that this had annoyed them. Despite the fact that large groups of guided overnight walkers are frequently present on the track, more than 40% of respondents indicated that they had not noticed these or any other large groups. 13% of respondents were annoyed by the presence of large groups (which could have included both commercial groups and groups of hunters or jet boaters) while only 7% were annoyed by meeting guided overnight walkers. Day visitors barely registered as a source of annoyance with only 3% of respondents indicating that this had annoyed them.

Conflict between widely varying types of visitors is one of the Department’s main management concerns on the Hollyford Track and was one of the key concerns raised in the earlier study by Kleinlangevelsloo (2005). These results and the low number of negative comments relating to social interaction suggest that interactions between different visitors are generally positive. In particular despite an incident where a firearm was allegedly discharged from the veranda of Alabaster Hut and the presence of hunting and jet boating groups during the survey period, no respondents mentioned hunting or jet boating parties being offensive.

Comments on social interactions were restricted to those relating to a lack of etiquette of day walkers, rubbish being left behind and crowding (which is discussed below). The survey did not coincide with the peak period for hunting and it is possible that if the survey had continued through March and April then more reports of visitor conflict may have occurred.

Respondents’ perceptions of crowding were also very low. Only 7% of respondents indicated that they felt any degree of crowding on the track itself. This level of perceived crowding reinforces comments from respondents stating that they were surprised at the low numbers of visitors that they had met. Perceived crowding at huts on the Hollyford Track was higher, with 34% of respondents feeling crowded to some degree. This level is below the guideline management threshold of 50% outlined in Shelby et. al. (1989).

The Shelby crowding scale which was used in this study, has been used extensively in New Zealand although there is a great deal of inconsistency in how it has been applied. Two previous studies of multi day trampers in Southland have used multiple Shelby crowding scales to assess crowding at different locations. These studies and others are useful for building up a picture of what represents a “normal” level of reported crowding on back country tracks and for seeing how the Hollyford Track compares.

Wray, Harbrow & Kazmierow (2005) found that 56% of respondents in their survey were crowded at Mason Bay Hut compared to 17% who felt crowded “on the track.” Ryan (1997) surveyed overnight visitors on the Milford, Routeburn (independent and guided) and Kepler Tracks (independent only) and found high levels of reported crowding among independent visitors. His results are summarised in Table 12 below.

TABLE 12: LEVELS OF REPORTED CROWDING FROM RYAN (1997)

TRACK	OVERALL CROWDING	HUT CROWDING	TRACK CROWDING
Kepler (Independent)	71%	76%	56%
Routeburn (Independent)	81%	87%	73%
Milford Track (Independent)	75%	92%	55%
Routeburn (Guided)	38%	24%	41%
Milford (Guided)	21%	13%	20%

A series of surveys carried out by Cessford (1997 a& b, 1998a-i) at a number of popular locations predominantly during 1994 have provided the best snapshot to date of typical crowding levels in the New Zealand back country. However, the data is now close to 15 years old and tourism numbers have grown strongly since the surveys were carried out. Cessford used a single Shelby scale to assess overall crowding and this was followed by an open ended question asking respondents to indicate locations that they felt were more crowded than others. He found that while crowding on tracks was generally not a significant problem, crowding exceeded the 50% threshold at seven out of the eleven sites surveyed and huts were often the focus of this crowding. Cessford's results are summarised in Table 13 below.

TABLE 13: LEVELS OF CROWDING AT SELECTED BACKCOUNTRY SITES (FROM CESSFORD 1997 A, B & 1998 A-1)

SITE	OVERALL CROWDING	% WHO FELT THAT HUTS WERE MORE CROWDED THAN OTHER LOCATIONS	% WHO FELT THAT TRACKS WERE MORE CROWDED THAN OTHER LOCATIONS
Abel Tasman Coastal Track	70%	46%	15%
Abel Tasman National Park (sea kayakers)	57%	28%	-
Heaphy Track	54%	67%	2%
Kepler Track	64%	58%	6%
Lake Waikaremoana Track	43%	52%	1%
Milford Track	61%	34%	21%
Rakiura Track	34%	51%	3%
Routeburn Track	75%	57%	13%
Tongariro Circuit	70%	54%	30%
Travers-Sabine Circuit	43%	55%	4%
Whanganui River (canoeists)	41%	35%	-

Walton (1995) used the 9 point crowding scale in her study on the Kepler Track and found that 80% of respondents felt crowded to some degree. 69% of respondents who had felt crowded indicated that they had felt most crowded in the huts. This compared to 19% who felt crowded because of the rush to get a bunk, 11% at places of interest and 6% on the track. All three surveys on the Kepler Track (Ryan 1997, Walton 1995 and Cessford 1997a) pre-date the introduction of the booking system in 2002 and the subsequent limitation on numbers however, a more recent survey suggests that crowding in the huts, but not on the track itself, remains a problem (M Harbrow unpublished data).

In their study of the Routeburn Track, TRC (2007) used a single nine point crowding scale but asked respondents to indicate the specific locations where they felt crowded from a pre-determined list. Overall 68% of overnight trampers felt crowded to some degree during their visit. 41% of respondents who were crowded indicated that this had occurred at MacKenzie Hut and 26% at Routeburn Falls Hut. This compares with 21% for the most crowded section of track (the track to the Routeburn Shelter). Like Ryan (1997), they found that crowding was more common for independent visitors (73%) than for those who were guided (52%).

Overall, although there are methodological differences between surveys, these results suggest that levels of crowding on the Hollyford Track are much lower than levels recorded on other popular tracks in Southland and elsewhere. Levels of satisfaction with the services and facilities provided on the Hollyford Track also represent a good result for the Department. In a survey carried out by DOC at 134 front country and backcountry sites across New Zealand, during 2005/06 a major factor influencing visitor's overall level of satisfaction with their visit was satisfaction with the standard of tracks (Rundle 2007). In this study, 80% of respondents rated the track facilities positively and only 5% rated them negatively. Other facilities were also well regarded. Huts were rated positively by 88% of respondents and hut wardens by 81% of those who had encountered them. 67% rated the signs and information panels positively and 16% negatively but these have been upgraded since the survey was carried out. Fewer respondents rated the toilets (52%) and maps and brochures (46%) positively, however, long drop toilets are a frequent source of dissatisfaction for back country visitors. The relatively low level of satisfaction with maps and brochures is partly due to the fact that a significant number of respondents (17%) did not make use of them. However, 18% of respondents rated maps and brochures negatively suggesting that the Department needs to improve the quality of these and possibly increase their uptake by visitors.

The main concerns raised by respondents with respect to facilities on the track centred around water supplies (at Hokuri Hut and Martins Bay Hut), inadequate sandfly mesh in huts, inaccuracies on DOC brochures and maps and on topographical maps, a lack of maps in huts and inaccuracies in signage along the track. These were however raised by a relatively small number of respondents in each case. Despite the reported concerns of respondents relating to aircraft, jet boats, crowding and the standard of facilities, sandflies were easily the most common answer when respondents were asked to state what they had liked least about their visit.

In common with other surveys carried out on high use tracks in Fiordland National Park (Kleinlangevelsloo 2005, Harbrow 2007b, TRC 2007) scenery, views and aspects of the natural environment were the aspects that respondents had liked the most during their visit. A number of key values or aspects of the experience were examined further using Importance - Performance Analysis. This showed that respondents valued 'nature and scenery' and 'natural peace and quiet' very highly and that despite the annoyance from aircraft and jet boats, respondents were generally able to experience both during their visit. The percentage of respondents who were unable to experience natural peace and quiet and nature and scenery on the Hollyford Track was 4% and 2% respectively.

Levels of overall satisfaction with the track were clearly high as 95% of respondents stated that they would recommend the Hollyford Track to other people.

The main limitation of this survey is that the whole range of visitor groups were not representatively sampled as Hollyford Guided Walk clients and visitors who departed Martins Bay by aircraft were not surveyed. In addition, because a significant proportion of hunting and jet boating parties access the valley during March and April (throughout the roar and over Easter), these groups may be under-represented in this survey. As previously mentioned, surveying all recreational groups is difficult given the diversity of recreational experiences in the valley. However, additional survey points where these different groups access the valley may go a long way to address this.

The assistance of Kerry Wray, Kate Roughan and Sally Chesterfield in administering the surveys is gratefully acknowledged.

Recommendations

1. No further quota of landings should be issued for Milford Aerodrome until impacts on the Milford flight path are within acceptable limits.
2. Continue with the implementation of the Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2007 with regard to aircraft landings in general, to limit the number of landings in the vicinity of the Hollyford Valley and aim to reduce the number in the long term until the level of annoyance with aircraft activity falls within acceptable limits.
3. Monitoring of the Hollyford Track should be carried out annually in the short term to monitor the effectiveness of the Milford Aerodrome concession process.
4. Future monitoring of the Hollyford Track should focus on annoyance with aircraft and motorised boats and the number of first time or less experienced trampers using the BCA / RS tracks, particularly the Demon Trail.
5. Future surveys at this site should aim to incorporate the full range of visitor groups, including the Hollyford Valley Guided Walk clients.
6. Concerns arising with the facilities on the Hollyford Track should be reviewed and addressed by management, particularly the assessment of accurate brochure and map information, and accurate signage on the track.

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Now we'd like you to tell us about your experiences on the track

9. What have you liked the **most** about your visit to the Hollyford Track?

10. What have you liked the **least** about your visit to the Hollyford Track?

11. How much do you agree or disagree that...?	Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
a) I was able to experience natural peace and quiet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
b) I was able to enjoy nature and scenery	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
c) I was able to experience solitude	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
d) I was able to relax and reduce stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
e) I was able to enjoy the experience with friends and family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

12. How did the activities of other visitors affect your visit?

	Did not notice this	Noticed this but it didn't annoy me	Noticed this and it annoyed me a little	Noticed this and it annoyed me a lot
• Behaviour of other visitors				
• Hearing or seeing helicopters				
• Hearing or seeing motorised boats				
• Hearing or seeing planes				
• Meeting day visitors				
• Meeting guided/ commercial overnight visitors				
• Meeting large groups				

Comment:

13. Did you feel crowded at all during your visit to the Hollyford Track?

a) On the track

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all crowded		Slightly Crowded			Moderately Crowded		Extremely Crowded	

b) In the huts

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all crowded		Slightly Crowded			Moderately Crowded		Extremely Crowded	

Comment:

14. a) Did you travel by jet boat during your visit to the Hollyford Track?

Yes No

b) Did you travel by aircraft during your visit to the Hollyford Track?

Yes No

15. Where did you **stay the night** on the Hollyford Track? (Indicate number of nights)

	Number of nights		Number of nights
1. Hidden Falls Hut		6. Martins Bay Hut	
2. Alabaster Hut		7. Pyke Lodge	
3. McKerrow Island Hut		8. Martins Bay Lodge	
4. Demon Trail Hut		9. Olivine hut	
5. Hokuri Hut		10. Big Bay Hut	

16. a) Did you camp during your visit to the Hollyford Track?

Yes No

b) Where did you camp? _____

17a. What did you think about the services and facilities provided on the Hollyford Track?
 (circle one number on each line)

	Very poor							Excellent	Did not use/ see
• Huts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Hut wardens	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Maps and brochures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Signs and information panels	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Toilets	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• Tracks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	

17b. If you circled **1, 2 or 3**, for anything above, please tell us why...

18. a) Would you recommend the Hollyford Track to other people?

Yes No

b) What things would you tell them about it?

Thank you for your time!

*If you have any feedback about this survey please contact Michael Harbrow,
 Southland Conservancy, Department of Conservation, PO Box 743,
 Invercargill. Ph. 03-211-2400. Email: mharbrow@doc.govt.nz*

Appendix 2 - Comments

Comments regarding facilities (summarised)

Huts	Mesh in huts too big for sandflies (5).
	Hokuri Hut needs water supply and sink inside (5).
	Water supply failed (Martin's Bay and Demon Trail Huts) (3).
	Increase hut capacity to 20 due to unpredictable numbers
	Need work to doors, windows, flyscreens and water supplies (hut unspecified)
	Why downsize Hidden Falls and Hokuri Hut?
	Hut left uncleaned
	Martin's Bay Hut too low
Hut Wardens	Did not see any (3).
Maps and Brochures	Clarify sections of track maintained to low standard on brochure (2).
	Wall maps needed in all huts (14).
	DOC map needs more landmarks so can judge distance along route (2)
	Inaccurate map and info on Hokuri Hut (2).
	Need a 1:50 000 terralink map of track (2).
	Map doesn't give accurate account of track difficulties (2).
	Need posters of birds and fungus etc.
	Update maps re: bridge and hut positions.
Topo map shows hut in wrong place.	
Signs and Information	
Panels	Sign re: difficult track 5 mins after Alabaster Hut should be closer to hut.
	Track markers difficult to find/ not enough (3)
	Max number sign on bridge at Hidden Falls on one side only.
	Jamestown signage not obvious enough (2).
	Not easy to find track between Martins Bay and Demon Trail Hut.
	Sign to Sunshine Hut and Hidden Falls Creek confusing as there is no specific direction given.
	More tree markers between Martins Bay and Hokuri
	More tree markers near Hokuri and difficult sections of track.
	Signs at half way points or 1 hour to go before huts would be helpful.
	Sign for Martins Bay toilet moved to new site.
	Need distance or time for walk along beach at Martins Bay.
	Better track markers from Martins Bay Lodge to Martins Bay toilet.
	Need sign indicating historic canoe.
	Signs confusing from Martins Bay Hut to seal colony.
	More markers along Lake McKerrow beach.
	Suggested time from road end to Alabaster Hut inaccurate (more than 5 hours) (3).
	Suggested walk times not accurate.
	Need more markers between airfield and Martins Bay Hut.
	Signage is not as good when going from Martins Bay to road end.
	Need names of creeks and river crossings.
Old signage around Hokuri needs updating.	
Times on signs not always consistent.	
Need distances as well as times.	

Need sign at Martins Bay end of beach to indicate that you can walk along beach in dry weather.
Need a sign at the first airstrip to show next one farther on.

Toilets
Need toilet at Martins Bay
Sandflies a problem (16).
Smell bad (5).
Need to be cleaner (6).
Need flush toilets (3).
No toilet paper (3).
Alabaster toilet needs screening from view.
New toilet at Martins Bay Hut (full) (2).
Hidden Falls toilet needs more ventilation.
Need replacing/fixing (unspecified).
Too small.

Tracks
River crossings dangerous (2).
Track was windy from Demon Trail Hut to Hidden Falls Hut.
Track has deteriorated over last few years, needs improving at boggy sections (2).
Tree falls need clearing (3).
Need more stones on Martins Bay section of track.
Found some parts extremely difficult.
Pyke to McKerrow track needs maintaining.

Most Liked Aspects of Visit

Tidy, easy, natural
Diverse scenery
Feeling I'm in an untouched environment
Scenery to stay quiet place, enjoy walking and nature
Great scenery at Lake Alabaster
The scenery with the snow covered mountains in the background and the blue / green river. The good huts.
Nice weather, not busy, good trail
Fun times and R and R
The scenery, the well marked trails, bridges, etc
Camping on long reef with seals under a beautiful moonlit sky
The lush nature of rainforest, waterfalls, the river, just magic, beautiful
Walking through the forest, peaceful atmosphere
The good weather and the surprisingly few other people on the track
Coast
Untouched and undisturbed, kea
The scenery, many bridges, amazing waterfall
Great variety of scenery
The cool bridges, clean huts
Scenery, very well kept track, nice huts
The nature, the nice weather, we had, swimming in the lake with a awesome beach
Lovely atmosphere, to be alone with nature
The scenery...especially all the different fungus growing. Huge trees, huge mountains and so much green.
So many beautiful waterfalls
Beautiful nature, a few people then on Great Walk, perfectly maintained paths
Scenery, solitude, peacefulness of the place, like the minimal impact of people (mostly - except for our trip).
Love the idea of walking down the valley to the coast
The track is well maintained, no fixed
The way back
Wild nature, surrounding untouched country
Swimming in the lake

Diversity scenery, and environments

The beautiful scenery

Swimming in lakes with an awesome view at the landscape, where just no one else in

The Pyke - untouched and virgin

The landscape, and the way

The challenge, scenery, being in Fiordland NP

Seals, waterfalls, people we met on track, scenery, jet boat ride

Beautiful place

Quality huts, sharing experience with overseas visitors/trampers

The weather

Isolation, seals, scenery

Snowy peaks, green beautiful nature, Hidden Falls Hut

Exotic bush to bash through, views of the mountains

Scenery, rivers, huts

The mountains, water and greenness

The walk of course, and the position of huts

Only did the first bit - quietness and solitude

The beautiful nature, learn about New Zealand

Seeing the waterfalls, swimming in the lake at Lake Alabaster

Nature walk and the challenge

Mostly good huts

Enjoying nature, beauty, give self a challenge.

Getting away from things and having a spell of good weather, the lakes and rivers were great but sandflies distracted from enjoyment especially when trying to swim.

Sunshine

The difference from forest, coast, long reef

The beauty, birds

Beautiful rivers, streams, waterfalls

Views

Scenery especially Martins Bay seal colony and penguins

Scenery and quietness, good huts

Scenery - nature is just awesome, great views, almost nobody else on the track, great

Giving myself a challenge

The scenery

Reward of being at Martins Bay Hut. It's location, the views, the seals and penguins. The presence of good huts, the good weather, swimming in lake, the option to get out in one day using jet boat (though expensive)

The scenery

The crystal clear water - beautiful

Nice huts, beautiful scenery

The good weather and the surprisingly few other people on the track

Well looked after, bridges over the creeks, good hut

The scenery, especially coast between Martins and Big Bay

The beauty of the area

Forest, history, scenery

The beautiful nature, learn about New Zealand

Natural scenery, spending evenings in the hut

The good huts and tracks

Beautiful mountains, water colour was amazing, amazing journey

We had awesome weather, the scenery was beautiful and the huts are new and comfortable

The wildlife at Martins Bay and the flora throughout the walk made me feel like I was in a rainforest

Easy walking and still interesting and great scenery

The people and the views of the mountains

Views of mountains, waterfalls, bush and birds

The bridges

Scenery, flight, McKerrow Hut, the bush walk which was challenging and adventurous, the seals, the beautiful weather

Seals, flight, forest, McKerrow Hut, island, weather

The pristine forests and the views from Lake Alabaster.

Scenery

Wonderful track, well maintained, beautiful waterfalls and streams. Fantastic wildlife and amazing forest

The new Alabaster Hut

Its flat and easy and the scenery

Great hut for a rainy weekend

The scenery

The kind of plants, moss, trees and the little streams

Meeting Norm the possum trapper, great to meet someone actively doing something to prevent the use of 1080 poison

Away from phones and daily hassles

The awesome nature, get some experience in walking, meet other trampers

Everything was really good. But Martins Bay and the seals was the peak

The beauty, splendour etc

The river and the immense views, wildlife everything, the entire experience

The scenery is fantastic

Peaceful, great company, quality huts, when the sun comes out and rain clears, fantastic, torrential rains in a dry warm hut

Views (lake and ocean), wildlife (penguins) lack of other people, hunting opossums with hut axe

No crowded huts, good track, diversity in landscape, lake forest, sea, beautify views of Darran Range

Landscape, wildlife, (fur seal colony, deer, birds) challenge (10 days trip)

Good hut, bridges on streams and rivers

the new huts were all of good quality except the missing sink at Hokuri Hut

The way

The easy and nice walking

All good

Quiet tracks, tidy and clean huts

Scenery, rivers, mountains. The huts, clean and tidy - excellent. Well formed tracks. Tracks to expected grade. Remote and less popular at more difficult sections

Track

Rainforest, waterfalls, swimming, Alabaster Hut

The track isn't a touristy track (you meet less people), you find different natural sceneries (rivers, lakes, ocean)!

The condition of the trail and the vegetation

Flight in, jet boat ride, tracks, stunning views, waterfalls and vegetation, lovely friendly staff at the lodges as we passed by - huts in great condition

Fantastic views of mountains - stunning scenery, bush, remoteness, feeling of isolation and untouched bush. 2 new huts were great.

Varied scenery, quiet trails, lovely huts located in splendid areas

Wilderness, solitude on the Big Bay Pyke Route and our 1st penguin sighting

Birds and scenery

Hiking atmosphere, environment

Nice and cruisy after Greenstone before Caples

Easy tracks

Scenery, clear water, nice walk way, no rubbish

The experience of doing a 5 day track

Not overcrowded, beautiful nature and great views, the perfect walk, not too hard, not too easy

Huts, scenery

Meeting other trampers

The scenery (weather was good which helped). Great huts, very few other people on tracks.

Tracks not marked too much with orange markers

Less crowded and most importantly the scenery

Scenery, peace, challenge (Demon Trail)

Good track

Scenery

Coast, vegetation, birds

Nature

Beautiful nature and scenery

Scenery

Beech forest, well maintained track to Pyke, good walking surface and boardwalks etc

All the cabins we stayed in up till Martins Bay were excellent. The tracks were well maintained.

Very few people on the track.

Nature

An awesome walk getting to know some new people

Good hut and services, scenery

Walk to Alabaster Hut and on to Demon Trail Hut. Walk was pretty exciting, seals, seeing river meet sea and Martins Bay, good hut that kept out sandflies, jet boat ride back up lake

The magnificent forest and mountain scenery

Nature, beech forest and birds

The peace and solitude away from the madding crowd

Standard of track

Scenery and sandflies

Track from start to Alabaster is first rate - pleasure to walk

Least Liked Aspects of Visit

Sandflies, ran out of water, I missed the toilet paper.

Sandflies!!! toilets, no water in the huts, no place to sleep at Martins Bay Hut.

Aeroplanes noise and the DOC toilet at Martins Bay. Hokuri Hut's sink was outside (a pest for sandflies).

Martins Bay windows and mesh blinds do not function in mutual harmony

Toilet at Martins Bay, the effluent was less than 50cm from the top. Martins Bay hut windows couldn't close without letting heaps of sandflies in. Hokuri Hut no tap inside meant letting lots of sandflies in

None

Track almost too good

Tree fall on track (made it considerably harder)

Sandflies

Sandflies, our huts were overcrowded due to a group of 10 people walking together (nice people), outside sinks

Bush bashing around muddy tracks

Sandflies

The weather

The sandflies

The last 15 km like a high way

The sandflies near all resting places

The walking

Hokuri Hut - sink on outside, sandflies

The sandflies (especially in the last hut!!!), less space in the last hut!!!

Screaming kids in the hut but after all, they were young kids

Nothing

Sandflies

Sandflies, sorry but they are the only discomfort

Sandflies

Nothing

Sandflies

Sandflies, toilets

Sandflies (especially on toilet), some toilets rather poor, sink outside Hokuri Hut bad idea because of sandflies

Noticing how badly affected the Hollyford is by deer

The number of deer and stoats

The sandflies

The sandflies (their mere existence)

Sandflies of course, people leaving rubbish in the huts and toilets.
Slippery rock, but that's to be expected
Sandflies
Sandflies
All the rain and sandflies
A lot of sandflies in hut (holes n net in mesh are bigger than the sandflies). Easy track = not hardcore trampers (they gave rubbish to heaters, they use a lot of water etc...)
Sandflies, Demon Trail
Rain and mist hiding mountains, lots of slippery tunnels and rocks
No complaints
Nothing I didn't like
Sandflies of course
None
Loosing my bottle of whiskey
The muddy paths
The winds are crazy here in New Zealand but I'm figuring them out
Sandflies by huts
Sandflies
Lack of signs when walking from Martins Bay. We went on a deviation over a swing bridge between Martins Bay and Hokuri Hut without knowing - poorly marked
Sandflies
More walking along the lake and rivers
Sandflies
Sandflies at Lake Alabaster
Sandflies at Lake Alabaster Hut. A group of six travellers at the Alabaster Hut
The Sandflies
The stupid sandflies
Nothing
Sandflies
Sandflies
Sandflies, Hidden Falls Hut is stuffy
Stuffy hut
Nothing
Sandflies
Sandflies
Neglect (non maintenance) of older huts. E.g. Martins Bay Hut. Others at Martins Bay spoke of similar conditions at Big Bay Hut
Sandflies, noisy light aircraft overhead
I hate sandflies
Sandflies
Sandflies
Lack of people
The beginning is boring to walk, it is to easy
Sandflies
Martins Bay Hut rather full, though only 8 people. Bit scared when I heard about walk wire, huts where sandflies coming through
Sandflies
Sandflies (expected, lazy day trippers / tourists from Martins Bay Lodge who stayed in DOC hut without paying
lack of inside sink in Hokuri Hut. Hunters with too much beer in McKerrow Hut who suggested we should move on. Which we did to avoid them. Trampers from lodge that came to stay at Martins Bay Hut bringing beer, wine, cheese etc. Screens that leaked sandflies at Martins Bay Hut, bad, needs updating or repairing.
Sandflies
Sandflies

The fact that people fly in to Martins Bay it spoils the solitude feeling. Also the sharing of Martins Bay Hut with private visitors who have brought lots of food, wine and beer, no fun.

Very similar to some tracks in Australia

Sandflies

Not enough view points to the mountains

Walking in the bush, no views

Sandflies

Sandflies

Sandflies

Sandflies

Long passages through forest without any views

The section of the path between Demon Trail and Hokuri Hut. The description in the brochure provided wasn't right, very difficult

Aeroplane noise, lack of bird life

Guided tourists

Falling down

Sandflies

Only jet boat and walked out

Sandflies

Lots of sandflies

Sandflies

Sandflies

Distance from river and lack of views

The scenery wasn't too impressive, the high cost of the jet boat, love mountains

Sandflies

Sandflies

Sandflies

A little too long for mainly a forest

Tourism - helicopters and planes and motor boats (a noise of them) and sandflies

Motor boats, helicopters

Track surface from Pyke bridge to Lake McKerrow (still nice place to be through)

Rain

That it wasn't longer (bad weather forecast make us shorten the trip)

The sandflies

Nothing I didn't like but I would suggest a few more trail markers in the middle portion.

Nothing

Flat track

It's flat and hard (gravel surface) on the feet

Sandflies and mud

Sandflies, parts of the track have not been maintained and markers were occasionally difficult to find

Not happy about group of four jet boats buzzing around lakes and rivers

Sandflies

No idea

Nothing wrong

The sandflies

Sandflies

The sandflies

Sandflies and rain

The bush bashing experience (off track)

Sandflies

Nervous about making it back before dark

Rain

Leaving so soon

Sleeping under a too small shelter

Another group hunting in the area

The time estimations were slightly shorter than it really took

Rocky terrain

Everything was good

Sandflies

Nothing

Sandflies

That the weather changed from sunshine to rain. Guys who leave their litter in the stove.

Calling a trail the Demon Trail when in fact it was like walking the clouds of heaven

Poor advice from desk staff at Te Anau re: conditions of track from Big Bay Hut to Martins Bay

Comments on the Effect of Other Visitors

A near total absence of people only saw 6 on tracks and no more than 10-12 on any nights stay.

Alabaster Hut garbage in toilet. Well maintained huts overall with courteous, friendly fellow trampers.

Always nice to bump into other folks on the track and fellow spirits

Amazingly empty considering time of year and beauty of the place

Behaviour of other visitors: fellow trampers (2, who shared our time line for 6 days) were great, and very enjoyable. Day trippers from Lodge were obnoxious and lacked hut etiquette (e.g. left door open lots, walked around in muddy boots, left trash, didn't pay for DOC hut etc). Day visitors and guided walkers:

The other groups we met were nice enough (guided nature walkers and not bothersome

Fantastic tramp to Martins Bay needs more signs at Martins Bay about need for fitness and slippery track.

Flown in visitors partly spoiled the solitude, are aware that HVW comm. activities are the reason there is a boat service available

Got to meet a fine crew, were very nice and generous and left us food in the morning

Great track, better than Great Walks, because it is not as popular as one of these. Sometimes crowded tracks

Haven't seen anybody, just my 'annoying' friend

Having a wonderful experience in the area, park etc

I did not see any boats, but if I was fishing I think they would have bothered me

If we are going to allow aircraft in an area like this can at least place restriction so they are forced to invest in quiet ones, low noise

In the Demon Trail Hut there was much rubbish after the Discovery TV people had been there. It took me seven hours to clear it all

It annoyed me to find rubbish in the wood (especially in the areas where the day visitors are!) And it annoyed me to have a lot of day visitors in the last hut.

It was such an overwhelming walk, perfect. But there must be always some persons who are not ready for such a beautiful place. Please build up a sign just for people with good spirit

Just love the Hollyford, would love to come back

Just one group passed by

Keep the planes out you can't appreciate the track or valley with that carry on

Large groups seemed to spread themselves out a lot and not leave much room for late arrivals. Rubbish was left in the hut, but the hut was great.

Met guided group on our last day

Met up with group of 10 independent trampers which made hut crowded. 17 one night and 18 another in a 12 bunk hut

No problem enjoying with like minded people

Not everyone sweeps out the huts and lifts the mattresses. Mostly kitchen benches clean but outside sinks often unclean. Good to have fly spray, detergent and wipes at some huts, though wipes a bit grotty

One six-head youngsters group in the Alabaster Hut just was too noisy all the time. They didn't care at all about the other five overnight guests, they banged the doors all the time, screamed around, well behaved as if they were alone

Only one snorer in the hut

Otago University Tramping Club started two bus loads of walkers off at road end on Friday night, not clever putting 110 people into bush when most huts have 12-22 beds and tracks have other walkers

Overall not too bad

People day visiting were oblivious to not waving food in peoples faces and oblivious / non trampers in action – aka leaving doors open, being loud etc.

People not paying hut fees

Perfect

Really enjoyable walk would recommend track

Slept one night outside because a hut for 6 was occupied with 9! But they all were really friendly and nice!!

Some people leaving rubbish in the fires place

Some people left this rubbish in the huts or fireplace

Spectacular route and trail, looking forward to doing it again with pack rafts

The airspace above the Hollyford Valley seems to be the commercial route to Milford by light aircraft. The incessant noise of the aircraft (on a fine day) is annoying

The annoyance of other visitors centred around rubbish left in huts

The commercial operators at Pyke Lodge were a bit snobby when we were there to ask about jet boat charters.

The large group we encountered would have annoyed me if I'd had to sleep in the hut with them. There were about 15 in the group

The meeting of large groups who had been flown in spoils the feeling of achievement being in a place only accessible after a 3-4 day tramp

The valley belongs to everyone, and we all should be able to enjoy it

There must be a less unobtrusive flight path these planes could take to get to Milford Sound

There were very few people on the track. Two hunters one night and a fellow trumper for our 5 days.

Were at 12 bunk hut with 4 people early night only but maybe too small for that many people

Would be nice to know when a group of 8 trampers are using a hut as it reduces space very quickly with only 3 walking parties. We were happy to sleep on the floor though. It seemed to be more of an annoyance to others when we arrived

Wouldn't want too many more planes etc

Comments on Crowding

1st hut people on floor, 2nd hut moderately crowded

But we slept soundly on the floor in Hidden Valley Hut and Martins Bay Hut. Thermarest are perfect. We had our tent if needed. No one sent us on our way thankfully. Although sometimes we felt we were getting the third degree about where we were staying

But we were a large group, 2 other guys were in the same hut and may feel different

Compared to Dart-Rees one week earlier with 50 people in Dart Hut and Daleys Flat Hut this was fantastic

Couldn't go to Alabaster as it was too full with other group

Crowded seem relevant, I'm from a rural area, feel it is being well maintained

Crowding in 1 hut, everyone was very accommodating

Crowding rating of 9 for Martins Bay Hut and 1 for others.

Didn't expect to meet any people, but they were all very nice

Didn't expect to see other people at all

Didn't stay in huts, saw 5 other trampers from road end to McKerrow in one day

Didn't use huts

Either 1 or 3 other people in the huts

Enjoyed huts and forest

Extremely quiet track and huts

Few people staying

Great huts, disappointed with the silence of the birds

Hidden Falls - 16 in hut, Martins Bay hut full

Hut clean and most keep it that way

I can't believe there are so few people up here

I was surprised at the low number of 'freedom' trampers at this time (mid Feb) and given the perfect weather

It changes, I had one night with only my partner or with only two more people and some nights the hut was full but it's great to meet other people

I've met nice people in this track

Just because of our big group

Just some people on the track and that is what I wanted

Just the last hut is too small, because few people stay more than one night there and you have to expect a lot of day visitors or visitors who didn't make the track but came in with the plane or boat and who think this hut should be for trampers of the Hollyford Track and not for people travelling by plane (they have

enough money to afford a night in the other lodges!) or the hut should be bigger.

Lake Alabaster was packed

Low visitor numbers 01/04/2007

Martins Bay an 8 (in how crowded they felt in hut)

Martins Bay Hut now needs to be replaced to put it at a similar standard to Hokuri and Alabaster and Hidden Falls

Martins Bay Hut possibly needs to be bigger

Martins Hut was crowded, all other one not.

Meeting up with group of 10 independent trampers which made hut crowded. 17 one night and 18 another in a 12 bunk hut

Most remote tramp from Alabaster to Hokuri that we've been on yet. Hidden Falls and Martins Hut more crowd to be expected

Mostly not at all crowded, except you meet groups in the huts

Nice huts

No tap water in Demon Trail Hut, outside tap water was not clear, so I got water from stream

Not annoying, nice to meeting other people

Not really crowded. 5 people in Hokuri Hut which is a bit smaller to begin with. The 2 hunters had lots (a week worth) of stuff so it was a little squished.

Nothing, a bit crowded in Hidden Falls Hut, not in Alabaster Hut

Of the seven nights we were on the Hollyford / Pyke River / Big Bay Route, only once was there more than one other person other than our party in the huts

Only crowded because of our group

Only on day 4 - 5 did we share the hut (Martins Bay) with two other visitors from the Pyke

Only one night that the hut was full

Only saw two parties in the huts. Two people on the trail

September, October OK not sure about summer track populations

Slightly crowded between road end and Alabaster Hut but often OK

So less people unbelievable

Stuffy hut and too many sandflies

Surprised at how few people were around

Surprisingly few people encounter on track

The first hut (Hidden Falls) is very popular so we meet a lot of people on this section from road end.

The huts are immaculate

This was occasional - only once

Very nice huts

We came in at the same time as a group of 10 people. It was great to mix with them for 4 of the 5 days but with people walking the track both ways it ended up being very very crowded

We expected the track to be crowded and it was not. This was one of our favourite things

We had the huts mostly to ourselves was annoyed by some trampers who used hut but did not pay

We joyously spent 3 of our nights alone. Hidden Falls, Demon Trail, Martins Bay, only passed 3-4 sets of people on the track

We kayaked down the Hollyford River

We only saw three other people walking on the track. Alabaster Hut and Martins Bay. 3 nights at huts we spent alone

We sleep in the tent

Would be good to have pegs for hanging gear on and sink inside hut at Hokuri and a dividing wall for privacy

Recommendations

Easy peaceful, natural

Scenery, satisfaction in seeing the ocean

Nice and easy track but expect to walk on a very rocky and undulating track sometimes. It's not a well formed track as describe the DOC brochure

Easy to walk, not crowded, great views, lots of sandflies

Wonderful quiet nature, great scenery and most of huts were comfortable

If you want to do the whole tack, don't do it alone because it is too dangerous

Pretty nice views, good huts and especially the first day is a pretty easy walk.

Nice and easy

Very easy and some hard parts, but fun not too muddy and it also rained.

Beginning of the track rather unspectacular at least compared to other New Zealand tracks, but the northern most part makes up for it with beautiful beaches and shores

Easy going and a mind blowing, magic track including the lovely Gunns motor camp, really an original
You can't avoid being impressed by this nature. It will take you away. Enjoy the easy walk and peaceful atmosphere. Enjoy New Zealand as it should be.

Everything good and bad

Amazing waterfall, quite easy to the Alabaster Hut, no amazing climbs

Walk to sea, similar to Australian walk (only to Alabaster Hut), arrange transportation, birdlife good

Gorgeous mountain views, no difficult climbing

To go the walk from Martins Bay to the road end because the last day will be easy walking. Not to go during the rain

Little amount of people

My favourite tramp in NZ so far. Tell about breathtaking views and superb huts. Suggest waders for sure and keep eyes peeled for trail markers as sometimes, due to changing conditions (fall trees, washout) are hard to spot.

Relatively flat track, not too hard, short distance between huts

Nice nature and huts, a few of people

Scenery, seals, peace, beauty, loved Gunns Camp - please leave this as is - it has so much character

Very maintained track, swing bridges, forest over forest and too much sandflies

Just amazing, beautiful great, a lot of fun

It's moderate track with some beautiful views but to enjoy the views you need to have good weather. It's a little bit muddy in the middle and the Demon Trail is quite slippery. For the Pyke good weather is necessary its very muddy with many rivers and you get very wet feet. It's well marked too and it can be very dangerous in rainy weather. But if you are prepared to get abandoned it's great fun

Many sandflies, nice scenery and the lake is cold

The scenery is amazing. The track is very challenging but rewarding. I think if there was a bit of maintenance done in the section between Alabaster and McKerrow it would have been less warning

It was one of the best tracks I did in New Zealand. Especially due to the track and landscapes one can discover

Amazing, hard, they have to make this track

Be prepared for bad weather, not as good a track as pamphlets show (e.g. Demon Trail), sandflies, read DOC brochures (times accurate and track description good). Recommend Hollyford Track company excellent package available. People are wonderful people and made our trip fantastic with their generous hospitality and extra service e.g. jet boat even though we weren't on their tour. Fantastic, will definitely recommend them.

That the tramp is equal to any of the 'Great Walks' tracks and offers many options of travel e.g. boat, plane return or boat in and plane out etc. Overall I believe the Hollyford Track is a wonderful tramping experience and with a small amount of work could be made even better. Of concern to me was the number of users that I believed did not pay for use of hut facilities. My party had purchased hut passes prior to the tramp. I noticed few if any trampers depositing tickets at huts and those that did not complete the visitor books were clearly 'ripping the system off'

A nice track but can be a bit flat and monotonous sometimes, great for an easy trip

Deer, isolation, scales, coastal scenery, no alpine passes (making walking safer in bad weather)

Nice, easy walk with nice huts

Amazing bush and mountains with good huts to stay in

The rivers are fantastic, place is peaceful

To bring bug spray, but the views and experience is worth their while

Condition is necessary for the whole track not for the last 20km

Scenery, sandflies and rain forest

Beware of the demons, strong warnings for level of fitness

Be prepared for a challenge, but a good time

Beautiful – quiet, not many people, not too difficult.

The beautiful scenery, good tracks on Hollyford side (but warn them that the sandflies are vicious)

Rainbow on Hidden Falls in the morning

Easy, very beautiful hike with spectacular views

It's worth visiting, tracks well maintained and good variety of difficult level, most people could do

Great scenery and track

Quiet, nice people, great scenery

Great rainforest, new huts with awesome views, wicked swing bridge, we had a great time

Very beautiful, give yourself a challenge

It is a beautiful forest and river

Great challenge with rewarding finish. Take the boat out to avoid backtracking all the way. Large diversity in track, views, huts. Thanks for this opportunity to provide feedback. Would be great if Pyke-Big Bay could be upgraded so that a loop track is formed.

New Zealand bush how New Zealand's meant to look

The water it is brilliant

Good easy tramp, if it's your first overnight this is a great start

The wild scenery of Big Bay and Martins Bay and what a nice out of the way place McKerrow Island can be

Nice and pretty easy to walk

1. Cost, 2. Mountain Views, 3. Demon Trail (this needs more emphasis in the leaflet - easy walk in good weather. A complete nightmare in wet weather 4. Hollyford Track guided walks and lodges (great for those that aren't fit enough for the whole thing)

Great and free due to less people, beautiful scenery

Forest, history, scenery

Take you more time than we did. Be prepared with insect repellent

Wonderful natural, good track, some huts are very good (Lake Alabaster Hut)

Good hut, good track

Paddling it as long as they were well experienced. Beautiful valley, amazing river, ocean was rugged and full of wildlife, penguins, dolphins and playful seals

It's a beautiful track, the scenery too. There are not a lot of people and the track is better than a Great Walk for example the Kepler track

Beautiful flora, remote in middle, Demon Trail not bad at all, great access to lakes, beware of dummies at Martins Bay but also look for penguins and seals at bay

They should come prepared for rain and they would enjoy it a lot, great track

Nature

You can see a lot of nice bridges

It was beautiful with a lot of different challenges like fighting against sandflies, seeking for water, crossing river and trees, slippery path.

Lot of sandflies, Nice bush, island and seals. They should do it in winter time because in summer there are no penguins.

Easy to walk, nice spaced huts and amazing vegetation (and birds) when the weather is fine the views are also fantastic

Great walk, great scenery but choose the weather

Fantastic

Good to walk also for people who are not so fit. Many trees with nice waterfalls and a very new hut with a beautiful lake

Great trail, but the rain was too strong to continue. They need good gear against rain

Good track for more experienced trampers, easy walk, nice huts and beautiful sunny (if the weather allows it)

The scenery

Easy track, beautiful forest and nice waterfalls, nice views on the mountains

That it is seriously underrated and much more enjoyable and better than Milford walk

Allow at least 5 nights. Track rough from Alabaster - Hokuri and so need more time for this.

Be prepared with insect repellent

Simply that it's a really great walk

Nobody there, remote, stunning, do the jet boat

The beauty and diversity of the scenery

Easy track (though I understand it gets quite muddy after Alabaster Hut), beautiful scenery, good huts.

Demon Trail aptly named, Martins Bay spend two nights, beats walking and interesting, Hokuri good for a swim, huts good standard, toilets OK, start early to get a bed, jet boat trip well worth while

Demon Trail is not as horrible as everyone says (granted it was sunny for us). Rather it was quite doable.

Although there are views and they are beautiful. Everyone we talked to before doing the Hollyford say "oye, why? There are no views and there is the Demon Trail" not true, it was a great 6 days

That is a good track with nice huts, that compared to some tracks like the Dart - Rees, Greenstone / Caples, all the

Great Walks in the region it is a track for those who like solitude and there is a great diversity in landscape

It's great challenging walk with beautiful views and wildlife. A fantastic journey in the nature

Easy track, nice bush

It was a relatively peaceful track with few and irregular mix up with other trampers. Would not consider this a beginner's walk. Hokuri Hut needs a sink inside the hut, not just outside, more regulation of trampers abusing the system who use the huts without paying for them

Beautiful natural and scenery, very quiet

An easy nice walking in the forest not crowded at all

Flash tracks, ease of travel

Peace and quiet. Opportunities for both novice and experienced trampers. Good opportunity for fishing. Make them aware you can park at Gunns Camp but that there is safer parking in Te Anau (This makes it super easy if you change your plans)

Experience, preparation required - need to be self reliant in emergency as few people. Beautiful views from huts, swimming holes. Martins Bay Lodge, people very helpful. Excellent tramping trip

Nice rainforest, very long to Alabaster 6-7 hours, great lake for a swim at Alabaster

One thing we didn't understand why do you can take for a Iris Burn Hut \$40 and for almost a same nice hut (like the Alabaster lake hut) you just take \$10. The only difference is the cooker and that the toilets in the building. But is this \$30 worth? No! If there were a drying room and showers this would justify this price... we decided not to do a Great Walk again. Concerning the Kepler Track: We know that you want the people to do the Great Walk regular and they all pay the high hut fees and so it is maybe your intention to leave the Shallow Bay Hut dilapidated, but for those who want to save money and take less comfort it is nevertheless Unfair that this hut has short bunks for an adult, has big holes in the floor and in the door so that the mosquitos and sandflies can come in. The night there was agony. Our last chance was to build up the tent in the hut because we didn't want to be eaten alive.

Great views, excellent trails huts, scenic rivers

Absolutely stunning New Zealand bush, waterfalls, clear waters, great track and huts, has different level of tramping (mellow or challenging). If limited on time road end - Hidden Falls Hut overnight and back is perfect

Stunning scenery, hard track along lake.

Absolutely. Need to have patience with the rocks and slippery parts and all of it is worth the effort. PS Walking poles are a must.

It is demanding but worth the experience. It is not for everyone. It is great for those who like a challenge.

Thank you DOC

Many birds, excellent scenery, when it rains slippery rock's and roots to be careful

Beautiful

It is sweet

Waterfalls, beach, seals, native forests, great, beautiful

Fantastic place to be so well cared for, good on you DOC

Beautiful scenery, easy walk (by fine weather)

Beautiful scenery, not too hard (by fine weather)

Good views, take insect repellent and anti itch cream. Good first overnight tramp to Hidden Falls. Waterfall in best in the afternoon evening

Less crowded wonderful scenery and bird life, take time to enjoy.

Great walk

Great walk and area

Peace and quiet

Real New Zealand

Real New Zealand

For me the best track in New Zealand, beautiful nature and scenery, not too much tourists

Scenery, free chocolates

Fantastic scenery and track

A great tramp to do in Fiordland without the price and amount of people on the Great Walks.

Beautiful scenery, not crowded

Beautiful, great walk, bring insect repellent

The great experience

Really scenic, some lovely walks and some pretty tough and not a lot of views. E.g. Demon and Hokuri and to consider options of boat (or flying). Certainly exciting, Martins Bay is just lovely but not

comfortable to stay too long

Scenery, great huts, beautiful river, birdlife, silence

It's a nice place, but challenging walk through an amazing forest untouched. The walk is wonderful but you need the sunshine to appreciate it and I think it seldom comes out

The great variety of the scenery, the forest, Hollyford River, lake and grand mountains scenery

Great walk, very easy. I had just left the Dusky a few days before this

Scenery, trout fishing

Fun hike, crazy long though..

Office staff should walk the track to gain experience we experienced overcaution re track from Big Bay to Martins Bay in rain. General consensus is that the Demon Track is far worse than DOC says and the Big Bay Martins route is better than DOC says.