The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation has been conducted about every five years since 1955. It provides information on the number of participants in fishing, hunting, and wildlife involvement (observing, photographing, and feeding wildlife) throughout the USA, and the amount of time and money spent on these activities. Derryck Draper reviews some of the highlights from the 2001 edition.



Huntin', shootin' and watchin'

The stated mission of the US Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service is to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. As a major part of its work it maintains the survey as one of the United States' most important wildlife recreation databases. We are told that the every five-year survey is the only source of comprehensive information on participation and spending in these related activities and – perhaps more importantly given the physical area of the United States - that it permits a State-by-State basis for comparison.

The information is used for estimating the economic impact of wildlife-related recreation for each State; for estimating the value of wildlife resources lost due to pollution or disease; for use in critical habitat analysis of threatened species; and for preparing environmental impact statements, budgets, and legislative proposals. As a further resource for market-related activities its value could be said to be inestimable.

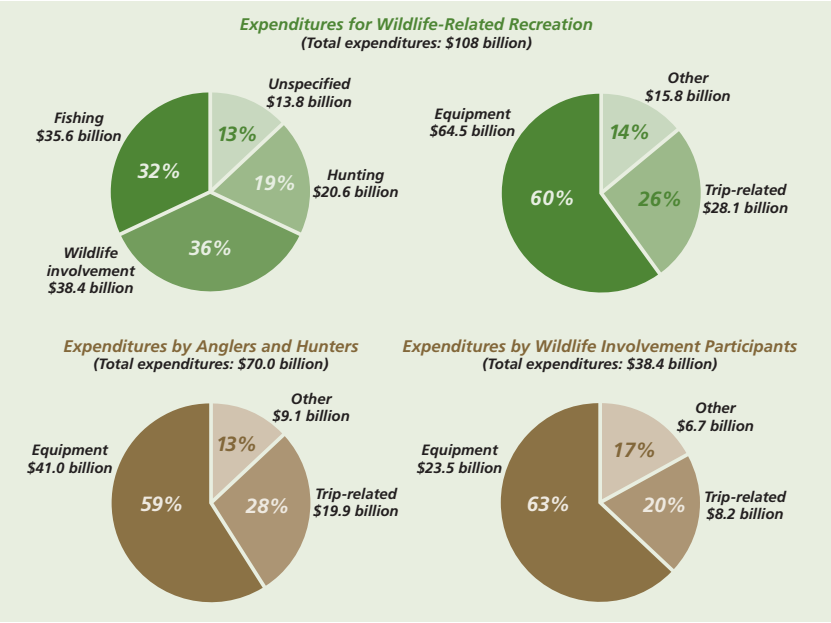
The year

In 2001 some 82 million US residents over the age of 16 years fished, hunted, or watched wildlife. Broken down, the indications are that 34.1 million people fished, 13.0 million went hunting, and 66.1 million participated in at least one type of direct involvement activity including wildlife observation, care, or photography. The apparent numerical anomaly is because many respondents participated in more than one activity.

A quantitative measure of the quality and depth of involvement is reflected in the spending by participants totalling $108 billion over the twelve months. This amounted to 1.1% of the US Gross Domestic Product. Of the total amount spent, $28 billion was for trips, $64 billion for equipment, and $16 billion for other items.

The fishing and hunting activists spent a total of $70 billion in 2001—$36 billion on fishing, $21 billion on hunting, and $14 billion on items used for both hunting and fishing (the sum of expenditures totals $71 billion due to rounding). Wildlife watchers spent $38 billion on trips, equipment, and other items.

Expenditures for wildlife related recreation in the US in 2001.



A book of 'Strange Conversations in Strange Places' would contain a personal entry recording the discussion with the managing director of an outdoor products company as, one mad March evening, we stood on a wet and windy British hillside at around midnight. The overhang of the rock under which we were sheltering was appropriately angled to direct a steady stream of water down the neck of one of us and there was only room for one-and-a-half bodies.

"How do I stop my brand names becoming generic?" he asked.

In the circumstances it took a considerable effort of will not to point out that, with hypothermia looming, the chances of it happening were less than likely. Fortunately bobbing head-torches in the near-distance heralded the approach of some competitors in the walking competition we were sponsoring and the subject was changed abruptly.

However, he did have a valid, if perversely optimistic, point. The day that a company's brand name becomes generic can be seen as a double-edged compliment. On the one hand it is public recognition of product quality, durability and market position. On the other, nothing is more certain than the likelihood that competitors will be able to capitalise on the brand owner's previous work, merely by offering for sale a product with sufficient similarity as to cause confusion in the mind of a consumer. As the science of international branding has progressed, so the number of companies facing the dilemma has increased exponentially. Attend almost any country pursuits fair and inspect the clothing stalls to find just such a case in point.

J Barbour and Sons Limited, of South Shields in North East England, opened for business in 1894. Almost one hundred and ten years later, one particular style of waterproof garment – a waxed cotton jacket – has become generic as 'a Barbour'. At the country fairs there are racks of Barbour-style garments, with 'style' just about legible on the handwritten sales cards. Some even add the dubious acknowledgment of a lower-case 'b', giving the garment a separate identity to that of the brand owner.



Barbour Bushman jacket in waxed cotton with leather trim, reinforced elbows and padded internal insulation.

Of course product quality might be suspect (and the prices asked for some of the jackets suggests) and it will not be carrying illegal labelling, but when it is thrown into the back of modish 4x4 automobiles for the morning school run it will invariably be known as 'my Barbour'.

The decade

A comparison of the results from the 1991, 1996, and 2001 surveys reveals that involvement in wildlife-related activities continues to occupy the recreation time for millions of Americans over the age of 16 years. Although the numbers of anglers and hunters fell modestly from 40 million in 1991 to 37.8 million in 2001, their expenditures increased from $53 billion in 1991 to $70 billion in 2001 (adjusted for inflation and comparability between earlier surveys).

Fishing continues to be a favourite pastime and in 2001, 16% of the U.S. population in the age group spent an average of 16 days fishing. However, a comparison between the 2001 and the 1996 surveys reveals that the overall number of anglers declined by 3% and overall expenditures on fishing fell by 17%. This was further analysed as a 16% drop in trip-related and a 22% drop in equipment expenditures. Over the full period the number of anglers dropped by 4% while expenditures rose by 14%. Saltwater fishing increased 22% but freshwater fishing declined by 6%.

Comparing 1991 to 2001, the number of all hunters declined by 7% but the number of big game and migratory bird hunters remained constant. The decreases occurred in small game (-29%) and the euphemistically termed 'other animal' (-26%) hunting. Expenditures increased 29% over the decade, primarily due to equipment expenditures.

Thirty-one percent of the US population over 16 years old fed, observed, or photographed wildlife in 2001, an increase of 5% since 1996. Their expenditures for trips, equipment, and other items increased 16%. The survey's authors suggest that this is not a statistically significant change.

Compliment? It certainly is, because the new owner has recognised the validity of purpose behind the brand name. The garment might wear out far more quickly than the genuine article, but the next purchase will probably illustrate a lesson learned.

International commitment

Barbour has gained an international recognition for its commitment to English style country wear, and, although waxed cotton coats and jackets are the mainstay of its range, the full offering requires a an extensive uptake from the textile industry in the forms of woollen tweed, cotton corduroy, lambs wool and cashmere knits, and waterproof and breathable dropliners. There is even Barbour's own version of 'soft-shell' in the fabric used for its Berwick Endurance Lightweight jacket – DuPont Cordura combined with Lycra.

The company says that, as far as it is aware, it offers a unique and worldwide service to its customers with the provision of a maintenance service for all the waxed cotton jackets it has ever sold. Anyone, from anywhere, can return their Barbour to be reproofed, repaired or altered, use and abuse notwithstanding. Garments of many, many years service – including a number over the half-century – are returned to the United Kingdom for a substantial 'making good' and few are ever beyond redemption.

Something old, something new

A recent promotion for Barbour waxed cotton products took the form of a campaign to 'put something back into the countryside'. Owners of old or unwanted jackets were invited to return them to the company headquarters where the garments would be refurbished and then passed on to the conservation volunteers working on projects throughout Britain.

As an added inducement to part company with their beloved Barbours, owners were offered a £25 voucher redeemable against the purchase of a new one should they wish to do so. As we go to press some 900 jackets have been returned to South Shields.



Barbour's Coldstream jacket is waterproof, breathable and lightweight.

For the ten years under review the total number of those being involved with wildlife decreased by 13%. In spite of the decline in participation, expenditures increased by 41% because of equipment purchases.

The content

The full US 'National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation' represents a document of significant statistical value to brand owners and retailers involved in the market sector. Trend spotting is as much an industry-based sport here as in any other supporting a leisure-based activity, and the volume of information provides dedicated number crunchers with more than enough input to enable them to replace 'guesstimation' with 'estimation'.

Base research: Vanessa Knowles