



NEWS

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**MILLIONS OF AMERICANS ENJOY WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATION,
PUMPING BILLIONS INTO NATIONAL ECONOMY, SURVEY SHOWS**

Fishing, hunting, bird watching and other wildlife-related recreation continue to be a cornerstone of the American way of life, as 77 million adults enjoyed some form of wildlife-related recreation in 1996, according to a nationwide survey sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The preliminary results of the 1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation also showed that wildlife remains a remarkable engine for economic growth and job creation. Americans spent \$104 billion on wildlife-related recreation during the year, representing 1.4 percent of the national economy. By comparison, Americans spent \$81 billion on new cars during the year.

"Americans cherish wildlife," said Service Acting Director John Rogers. "We like to fish. We like to hunt. We like to take a pair of binoculars out into the woods and simply watch birds and other wild creatures. Enjoying wildlife is part of our American heritage. It is also an important contributor to our national economy, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs."

The preliminary results showed that more than 39 million Americans 16 and older either hunted or fished in 1996 while 63 million enjoyed watching wildlife. In all, 40 percent of the adult population enjoyed some form of wildlife-related recreation.

Here are brief summaries of three major activities measured by the survey: fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching.

Fishing: Fishing continues to be one of America's favorite pastimes. In 1996, 35.2 million people 16 years and older fished, or 18 percent of the adult population. To do so, they spent \$38.1 billion, or \$1,080 each on average, during the year. This compares with 35.6 million anglers and \$27.6 billion in expenditures in 1991.

Significantly, the number of days anglers fished during 1996 rose 22 percent over 1991 to 624 million. More than 80 percent of fishing was in freshwater.

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Hunting: Fourteen million people 16 years and older hunted in 1996, compared with 14.1 million in 1991. Even as the number of hunters remained stable, the total number of days they spent hunting rose 8 percent in 1996 to 256 million. Expenditures rose even more dramatically, up 47 percent to \$20.9 billion. Hunters spent \$1,492 each on average for the year.

The largest number of hunters, 11.3 million, sought big game, while 6.9 million hunted small game and 3 million hunted migratory birds.

Wildlife Watching: Nearly 63 million Americans 16 years and older reported observing, photographing or feeding wildlife in 1996. This was 17 percent fewer people than reported in 1991. Nevertheless, expenditures on these activities rose nearly 27 percent over the period to \$31 billion. Feeding birds and other wildlife was by far the most popular activity, with 54.1 million participants.

The survey, which has been conducted every five years since 1955, was done for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by the Census Bureau. As part of the survey, the Census Bureau initially screened 80,000 households. From this, the bureau chose 28,000 sportsmen and -women and 14,400 nonconsumptive participants 16 years and older for detailed surveys throughout the year.

The final national report will be available in November. State-by-state reports will be released from November through March 1998.