



# NEWS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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## USFWS ECONOMIC STUDY SHOWS WILDLIFE WATCHING IS BIG BUSINESS

Wildlife watching has flown out of the backyard bird feeder and into the Fortune 500 arena, according to a new report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Americans spent \$29.2 billion to observe, feed, and photograph wildlife in the United States, according to the report, "1996 National and State Economic Impacts of Wildlife Watching." If wildlife-watching were a Fortune 500 company in 1996, it would have ranked 23rd.

"Sales of seemingly small items such as binoculars and bird seed are becoming a major force in the Nation's economy as people take a greater interest in watching wildlife," said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark. "The total industry output for wildlife watching--the overall economic 'ripple effect' of the \$29.2 billion Americans spent in 1996--is an impressive \$85.4 billion." For many local communities, the economic potential of their wildlife-watching opportunities still may be unrealized. This report shows that nationally and locally, investments in wildlife and wild places are investments in this country's natural resource legacy, and in its economic future.

According to the report, wildlife watching creates more than 1 million jobs, contributes \$24.2 billion in employment income, and generates \$323.5 million in state income tax and \$3.8 billion in Federal income tax. Wildlife watching also produces \$1.04 billion in state sales tax. In addition, spending by wildlife watchers increased by 21 percent since 1991, when the figures are adjusted for inflation.

Three types of expenditures are detailed in the report. Expenditures for equipment and related items, such as binoculars, cameras, wild bird food, membership in wildlife organizations, camping equipment, and motor homes, accounts for 57 percent of total spending. Trip-related expenditures, such as for food, lodging, and transportation, constitute 32 percent of total spending by wildlife watchers. Other items, such as books, magazines, contributions, and land-leasing, make up 11 percent of wildlife watchers' spending. Wildlife watchers are identified in the report as people whose principal motivation for spending or traveling is wildlife watching.

Nearly 63 million people age 16 and older--31 percent of the U.S. population--were wildlife watchers in 1996, according to the report. The report is based on the Service's "1996 National

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Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation," which is conducted every 5 years by the U.S. Census Bureau. The survey, based on more than 34,000 interviews with anglers, hunters, and wildlife watchers, is the most comprehensive survey of wildlife-related recreation in the United States.

Copies of the report, "1996 National and State Economic Impacts of Wildlife Watching," and the "1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation" are available by calling the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's publications unit at 304-876-7203.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service's almost 93 million acres include 514 national wildlife refuges, 78 ecological services field stations, 65 national fish hatcheries, 50 wildlife coordination areas, and 38 wetland management districts with waterfowl production areas.

The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes Federal excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies. This program is a cornerstone of the Nation's wildlife management efforts, funding fish and wildlife restoration, boating access, hunter education, shooting ranges, and related projects across America.