

# Economic Impacts Fact Sheet

### **Economic Impact of Birding & Wildlife-watching**

2006 US Fish and Wildlife Service National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (2007) (<a href="http://federalasst.fws.gov/surveys/surveys.html">http://federalasst.fws.gov/surveys/surveys.html</a>):

#### National data

- 47.8 million US residents observed birds around the home or on trips (fairly narrow definition<sup>1</sup>, as compared to NSRE, below)
- 19.8 million US residents traveled away from home to view birds.
- Over 71 million Americans spent nearly \$45 billion (in retail sales) on observing, feeding, or watching wildlife in the US in 2006.

#### North Carolina data

- 2.6 million wildlife watchers observers in NC, who spent \$916 million in expenditures
  - o Of those, 1.6 million observed birds around the home and on trips in the state

National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, NSRE (2007) (http://warnell.forestry.uga.edu/nrrt/nsre/Nsre/birding0807.pdf)

• 81.1 million Americans participate in birding (broader definition than USFWS survey<sup>2</sup>), roughly 35.4% of the population

# Wildlife Viewing in NC

The Outdoor Industry Foundation (2006) reported 1.86 million participants in wildlife viewing (bird watching and other wildlife watching) in NC; this accounts for 27% of the population.

The US Fish & Wildlife Service (2006) collected data from visitors at 8 National Wildlife Refuges in NC and VA (Alligator River, Mackay Island, Pea Island, Roanoke River, Pocosin Lakes, Back Bay, Great Dismal Swamp, and Mattamuskeet):

- Visitor expenditures totaled \$166,612,257 within the region
- 2/3 of respondents considered themselves tourists (not locals)
- Fishing was the number one primary activity, followed by bird/wildlife watching

<u>Survey of NC Birders</u> (on-line survey initiated by NC Birding Trail in Fall 2006, sent to members of the Carolina Bird Club and Audubon NC; 463 respondents):

<sup>1</sup> Birding as the primary activity or a special interest; closely observing birds to identify species or otherwise study their habits around the home; those who may engage in birding as a secondary activity are not counted.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Birders as people who view, photograph, study, identify, or otherwise take interest in wild birds in the outdoors, no matter how often or if the primary activity.

- 54% of NC birders live in Piedmont region
- 72% travel away from their home to view birds at least 10 days/year
- 38% spend more than \$80 per trip on trip-related expenses
- 75% had heard about the NC Birding Trail prior to the survey
- 92.6% plan to use the NC Birding Trail regional guides to plan future birding trips in NC

## **Other studies:**

- Approximately 38,000 people visited two southeast Arizona birding "hotspots"—Ramsey Canyon and San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area—from July 1991 to June 1992 and spent an estimated \$1.6 million (Crandall, Leones & Colby, 1992).
- Roughly 100,000 people visited Cape May, NJ in 1993 to observe birds and spent \$10 million (Kerlinger & Wiedner, 1994).
- Approximately 100,000 birders visited the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge near McAllen, TX from November 1993 to October 1994 and spent \$14 million (Kerlinger, Eubanks & Payne, 1994a).
- Between 14,500 and 22,700 people visited the Middle Platte River in Nebraska to observe wildlife and spent between \$11 million to \$18 million (Eubanks, Ditton, & Stoll, 1998).

The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, which consists of over 300 distinct wildlife-viewing sites spread among more than 40 Texas counties, has provided opportunities for travelers to see and learn about Texas wildlife, has promoted an understanding of the need to conserve wildlife habitats, and has helped to diversify local economies through nature-based tourism. In 1999, Eubanks and Stoll conducted an economic impact study of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. They found that:

- Travelers devoted an average of 31 days/year to birding on the trail.
- Their most recent trip lasted 8.7 days and 7.6 nights.
- Travelers on the trail averaged expenditures of \$78.50/person/day, within the region.
- Only 4.6% of travelers on the trail were residents within the region.

#### Literature Cited

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