Do Canadian Wildlife Festivals Promote the Principles of Ecotourism?

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Augustana Campus

Pathways to Success
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Outline

- Ecotourism and festivals?
  - Background and objectives
- Study goals, rationale
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
What is Ecotourism?

- Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people (The International Ecotourism Society 2010)

Typical activities?
Ecotourism – key objectives?

- Nature-based
- Environmental education
- Managed sustainably
  - Environmental
  - Economic
  - Social (Buckley 1994, Blamey 1997, Fennell 2001)
What are Wildlife Festivals?

- Annual public celebrations of local wildlife
- ~ nature, birding, species
- Growing in North America
  - 10 in 1992 to 240 in 2002
- Volunteer/business
- Typical activities?
- Typical visitors?
Common Festival Objectives

- Recreation
- Community pride
- Community profile
- Promote tourism
- Economic impacts
Potential “Wildlife” Festival Objectives

- Celebrate nature
- Raise awareness
- Generate interest
- Wildlife conservation
  (Lawton 2008)

- Eg. “long-term positive action on behalf of birds”
  (Wings Over the Rockies – Invermere, BC)
Goal: do these objectives match?

- Little research
- Objectives, practices, and outcomes
- Potential “greenwashing”
- Identify best practices
Methods

- Inventoried 90 wildlife festivals
- Surveyed 54 organizers (60% response)
- Self-evaluated ecotourism principles
  - 25 objectives (major-2, secondary-1, 0)
  - 16 practices (yes/no)
Results

- 26% promoted as ecotourism events
- But many external promoters use that “tag”
## Results – Objectives (Nature-based)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature-based (wildlife, local ecosystems, environment) (4)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not nature-based (captive, non-living) (2)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not nature-based (cultural, historical, entertainment) (2)</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Results – Objectives (Education)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get kids and adults interested (2)</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about local wildlife and natural history (2)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about wildlife and environmental problems (2)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of environmentally-friendly behavior (1)</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Results – Objectives (Sustainability)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal disruption (1)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental benefits (raise $ for wildlife, habitat, environment) (3)</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic benefits (tourism, employment, spending) (3)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social benefits (publicity, volunteers, members) (3)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Results – Practices (Nature-based)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public protected area</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private protected area</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Results – Practices (Education)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education for env protection</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research on tourists’ attitudes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landowner reimbursement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research on residents’ attitudes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Results – Practices (Sustainability)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research on wildlife trends</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations for habitat protection</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research on habitats</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees for habitat protection</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research on festival impacts</td>
<td>6</td>
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Results – Practices (Sustainability)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re-use promotional materials</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycle</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize waste</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserve energy</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ecotourism ID and conservation?

- Promoted as an ecotourism event?
  - Objectives: 1/25 was different
    - Raise $ for general env protection
  - Practices: 5/16 were different
    - Monitor progress of objectives
    - Donate fees for habitat protection
    - Document wildlife trends
    - Research tourist wildlife attitudes
    - Promote festival/economy links
## Comparing Objectives

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<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
<td><strong>Practices</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature-based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
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<td>Moderate</td>
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Outcomes for wildlife and habitats?
Conclusions

- Major focus on nature & education
- Can enhance environmental benefits
- Attention to local & economic issues?
- Consistency: objectives & practices
- What about outcomes?
Acknowledgements

- Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada
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Thanks!