

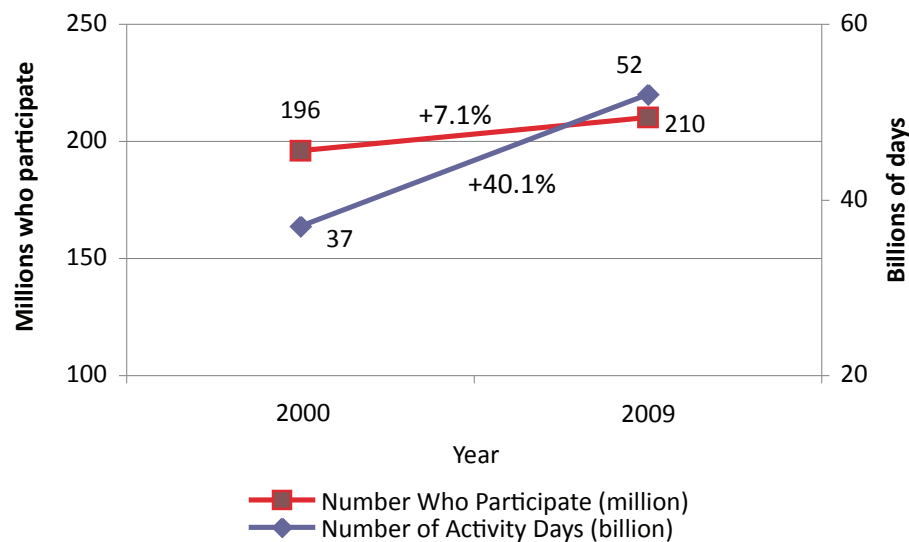


Figure 4.28—Growth in number of people age 16 and older and number of annual participation days in 50 nature-based outdoor recreation activities in the United States, 2000-2009.

Invited Paper

Trends in Developed Forest Camping

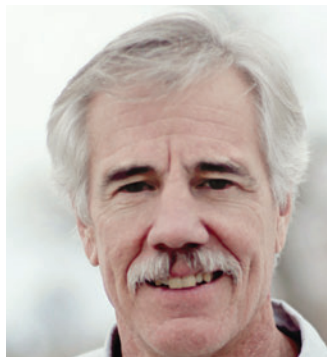
by Barry A. Garst, Daniel R. Williams, and Joseph W. Roggenbuck⁶

Introduction



Barry Garst

Over the past 40 years, the number of forest campers has grown from 13 million in the 1960s to approximately 56 million in 2000 (table 4.6). Camping is now one of the more



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common ways that Americans spend time in the outdoors, with over one-fourth of the U.S. population participating in some form of camping.

From the late 1950s to the early 1970s, researchers studied elements of developed camping experiences such as associated activities (King 1966) and patterns of social interaction (Burch 1965, Hendee and Campbell 1969, Shafer 1969). Hendee and Harris (1970) observed that developed campgrounds reflected complex social systems among groups, and both Etzkorn (1964) and Hendee and Campbell (1969) found that campers often appeared to care more

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for social interaction than natural amenities. For example, research into activity patterns of campers emphasized the importance of campfires for facilitating social interaction during camping (Hendee and Campbell 1969).

This trend summary compares developed camping in the 1960s and 1970s with 21st century developed camping and suggests that developed forest camping has changed considerably over the past 40 years, especially in the area of equipment and technologies. Today's campers show different characteristics, preferences, and behaviors than campers of the 1960s, when camping was sometimes viewed as an inexpensive lodging option for families on vacation (ORRRC 1962). Developed campground campers today tend to be retirees camping in motor homes or recreationists using camping to gain access to specific recreation activities (Cordell and others 1999). Despite these changes the values and benefits of the experience have much in common with the past.

Technological advancements have changed modern camping. Synthetic materials have replaced natural fabrics in many types of clothing, tents, and sleeping bags (Tilin and Grudowski 1997). Advancements in equipment such as weather-resistant tents, portable cook-stoves, self-inflating pads, collapsible water bladders, and solar-heated showers have made camping much more comfortable today (Cordell and others 1999). Modern campers utilize a wider variety of electronic technologies for communication and entertainment as compared to what was available to 1960s campers. In addition to the ubiquitous cell phone, televisions, DVD players, wireless connections, and even satellite dishes have become commonplace, which may suggest that today's campers spend much of their time



Travelling and camping. (Photo courtesy of Ken Cordell)

engaged in passive entertainment rather than in active, nature-based experiences. However, even some of the studies of developed camping from the 1960s noted that “few visitors engaged in activities that were dependent upon the natural environment or displayed any concern for the flora, fauna, geology, or natural history of the area” (Hendee and Campbell 1969).

Modern campers also appear to have a different set of expectations for campground facilities when compared to 1960s campers. The trend even among some public-managed campgrounds, particularly those found in State park systems, has moved toward expanded amenities and services, reflecting trends in American society toward personal comfort and convenience. In addition, many U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service campgrounds are now managed by outside concessionaires and thus reduce the prevalence of more rustic developed camping opportunities that provide fewer amenities.

A Virginia Case Study

Further documentation of developed forest camping trends can be gleaned from a 2003 case study of developed camping conducted in the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area with 38 camping groups across three campgrounds that varied in their level of development (Garst and others 2010). Participants tended to be very experienced with camping, with 13 percent having 21 to 25 years of experience and 41 percent having more than 25 years of experience. Participants had traveled to Mount Rogers from nine States, with most participants (37 percent) being Virginia residents.

Camping vehicles—Data about the types of vehicles that participants used were collected in the interviews and via observations made at the time of the interview. In the less developed campgrounds, in which the roads were too small to accommodate larger camping vehicles, participants used tents or small pop-up campers. Participants from the moderately developed campground used tents, pop-up campers, pull behind trailers, and smaller motor homes. These campgrounds could accommodate larger camping vehicles like motor homes because of wider, paved roads, but because they did not have full hook-ups, motor homes were rare. Participants from the highly developed campgrounds tended to use motor homes and larger pull-behind trailers.

A common theme related to camping vehicles that emerged from the interviews involved “transitioning” or “upgrading” as a participant moves from one type of camping vehicle

to another during the course of one's life to accommodate preferences for comfort. Transitioning from tent camping, to a pop-up, to a camper, and finally to a motor-home was seen by many participants as a natural progression and an inevitable aspect of developed camping. As a participant from the moderately developed campground shared, "We went from a tent to a pop-up because we [were] getting so old we couldn't get down on the ground and get up... campers definitely want more comfort when they get older."

Electronics—To explore how technology facilitated the modern developed forest camping experience, data were collected about electronics as a part of the interviews. Participants from the less developed and moderately developed campgrounds used the fewest types of electronics, which typically included items such as radios and televisions.

In comparison, participants from the highly developed campground used a wide range of electronics, including televisions, radios, VCRs, personal gaming devices (e.g., Nintendo, Game Boy, Sega/Play Station), cell phones, microwave ovens, CD players, satellite dishes, coffeemakers, refrigerators, DVD players, electric blankets, weather radios, air conditioning units, electric grills, digital cameras, and even a ham radio. This seems consistent with the fact that a majority of participants camping in the highly developed campground utilized motor homes which gave them easier access to electricity, thus making electronic technology much more likely.

In addition to asking participants about the electronics they brought and utilized on their camping trips, they were also asked about whether or not these electronics were important for their developed forest camping experiences and how these technologies influenced their experiences. The most common theme that emerged among participants was comfort and convenience. Participants used technologies, from camping vehicle to gear to electronics, to make the camping experience more pleasant and less work. As a participant from the highly developed campground explained, "We wouldn't be here if we didn't have waterproof tents and nylon bags to put all our stuff in, and plastic coolers to keep our ice frozen... This kind of stuff is what we need, it really makes camping more comfortable."

Camping experiences—To identify the most salient aspects of developed forest camping experiences, participants in the Virginia study were asked to describe in detail different aspects of their developed forest camping experiences. Participants were involved in a range of activities during

their camping experiences, some onsite and some offsite. Activities were almost always social, and a majority of participants stated that "who they were with" was most important. The setting of the experience was also salient, as expressed through nature-based activities and preferences for certain campground and campsite characteristics. Participants expressed a range of emotions that they felt during their camping experience, and their mood states ebbed and flowed based upon what was happening to them (e.g., the weather) and what they were doing.

Meaning of camping—Participants were asked about the meanings associated with their onsite developed forest camping experiences (associated meanings) and also about the ways in which camping was meaningful within the greater context of their lives (life-context meanings). The most common associated meanings were: restoration (including escape, rest, and relaxation), family functioning, special places, self-identity, social interaction, experiencing nature, and opportunity for children to learn. When compared to camping studies from the 1960s and 1970s, one key difference appears to be the increasing importance given to family functioning and children's learning (Garst and others 2010).

As described by participants, camping meanings were interrelated. For example, family functioning meanings were related to the opportunity that participants had to "escape" (a category of restoration) the stresses of their home environments in order to focus on members of their family during their camping trips. Another example was "special places," which evolved from participants spending time in nature and then developing family traditions focused around their attachment to a particular campground. Another example was "appreciation for nature," which evolved from experiencing nature and feelings of restoration. As participants spent time in nature and were restored through contact with it, they expressed appreciation for nature.

Some meanings were not only associated with participants' current camping trip but were also identified as important in the greater context of participants' lives (life-context meanings). The most common life-context meanings were: restoration (including escape, rest, and relaxation), sharing positive family memories and traditions, experiencing and appreciating nature, freedom, novelty, self-identify, family functioning, and self-reliance.

Implications

Comfort and convenience, important to the participants in the case study, were most often associated with access to campsite amenities such as water, electricity, hot showers,

clean bathrooms, and technologies such as satellite and cell phone reception. Future developed forest campers will likely continue to demand these types of amenities.

Developed forest campers perceived many benefits related to family functioning and identified family functioning as an important meaning associated with developed forest camping experiences. Quality family interaction was in part attributed to the opportunities camping afforded families to have some “down time.” This additional quality family time was used for unscheduled time together as well as to participate in organized programs, campfires, and self-guided trails associated with the campgrounds and nearby facilities and attractions.

Despite a plethora of “indoor” conveniences, campfires continue to be a center for social experiences in the campsites and were the catalyst for the expression and sharing of stories and even traditions. Sharing and hearing stories about camping was seen as a particularly valuable component of the social interactions among campers. Managers may want to consider ways to enhance these types of experiences through site construction, visitor interpretation, and organized programming. As one example, interpretive sites and trails can incorporate more electronic communications technologies to help attract younger participants.

Given what we learned from researchers investigating developed forest camping in the 1960s, it is apparent that the technology campers take with them has evolved, while the experiences and meanings have remained largely the same. People continue to look to developed camping as a way to comfortably contact nature and to satisfy important human needs for personal restoration and social bonding. The motivations that led campers to escape and to travel in social groups to less populated areas for the restorative effects of a camping trip are still very much present. Coupled with meanings like emotional attachments to special camping places, the strengthening of social family relationships through memories and stories, and the enhancement of a general appreciation of nature, developed forest camping continues to play an important role within the larger context of outdoor recreation experiences.

End Invited Paper

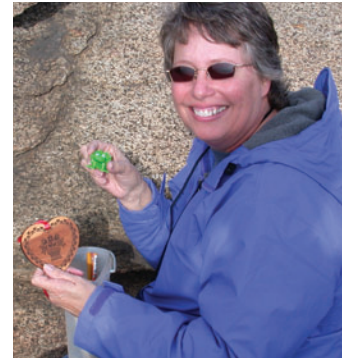
Invited Paper

Geocaching: Form, Function, and Opportunity

by Ingrid E. Schneider and Deborah J. Chavez⁷



Ingrid E. Schneider



Deborah J. Chavez

The role technology plays in outdoor recreation is evolving and of ongoing interest. One technology-related activity in particular emerged at the start of the 21st century: geocaching. Geocaching involves using a handheld GPS device to find hidden caches in areas based on clues posted on the Internet. Geocaching.com, the primary source for geocachers, provides information and guidelines for participating in the activity. In 2010, geocaching celebrated its 10th birthday heralded by nearly 100,000 geocaching.com members and nearly 1,000,000 active caches around the world. The current estimate of the percent of population of people in the United States of age 16 and older who participate in geocaching is 3.5 percent (based on sampling for the NSRE described earlier). This is roughly 8 million participants of this age in the United States based on the Bureau of Census population estimate for 2008. Since this is an activity popular with youth, there obviously are many more participants than this 8 million.

In its simplest form, a geocache is a small, waterproof container with a logbook. The logbook contains information from the cache hider and notes from its finders. A logbook might contain information about nearby attractions, coordinates to other unpublished (not posted on the Internet) caches, and even jokes. Those who take information from the logbook then leave some information too, at least providing the date and time they visited. The geocaching.com Web site notes that geocaching is deceptively easy; it is one thing to see where an item is

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