



Trail User Survey Report 2017

November 7, 2017

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Trail Conference Trail User Survey Methodology

Data collected by Trail Conference Stewards

- September and October, 2017

Site locations/sample size:

- Bear Mountain State Park (87)
- Breakneck Ridge, Hudson Highlands State Park (78)
- Catskill Forest Preserve (138)
 - Blue Hole (32)
 - Giant Ledge (62)
 - North Point (19)
 - Slide Mountain (25)



Trail Conference Trail User Survey Data Analysis

Data was input/saved into Excel and analyzed using SPSS

Data will be presented as follows:

- Total/collapsed data
- Comparative results across the three parks
- Sub-comparison of the four Catskill Forest Preserve sites

(Note: Although there are relatively low base sizes across these four sites, exploratory comparisons can still be discussed.)



Trail Conference Trail User Survey Executive Summary: Key Findings

This exploratory study identified unique aspects of all three parks, namely:

Bear Mountain:

- Most communicative that this site is maintained by nonprofits and volunteers
- 1/3 of visitors were 46+
- Hikers went there for family time
- Litter was a pronounced issue

Breakneck Ridge:

- Many returning hikers
- Word of mouth often brought hikers here
- Hikers were there for exercise
- Too many people and graffiti were highlighted issues
- * This park appears to have the most room for improvement in terms of trail maintenance; some of the issues likely are due to the park's (claimed) overcrowding/overuse

Catskill Forest Preserve:

- Draws a lot of first-time visitors
- Maps/guidebooks helpful/drew people to this location
- This location had the most younger hikers
- Hikers went there to experience nature and relax
- Many are unsure who maintains these trails (particularly at Blue Hole & Giant Ledge sites)

Regarding trail/park maintenance, of the issues highlighted, litter/dumping was the most prominent (17.5%). Specific to trails: 12.5% indicated trails were not marked well enough and 8.6% claimed trails were eroded (both issues were primarily mentioned at Breakneck Ridge). Conversely, half of the sample had no complaints/issues (several hikers expressed gratitude with positive commentary).



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Trail Conference Trail User Survey Total Sample Data

Breakneck Ridge, Bear Mountain &
Catskill Forest Preserve Locations



Total - Data Collection: Day/Time

- Two-thirds of the sample was collected in September, with the remainder occurring in October of 2017, with the majority of data collected over the weekend.
- At least 6-in-10 of surveys were obtained in the afternoon hours.

Month	Number	%
Sept	195	64.4
Oct	108	35.6

Time	Number	%
AM	68	22.4
PM	180	59.4
Not Recorded	55	18.2

Day	Number	%
Sat	161	53.1
Sun	123	40.6
Thurs	5	1.7
Fri	3	1.0
Mon	3	1.0
Not Recorded	8	2.6



Total - Data Collection: Locations

- While approximately one-quarter of responses came from both the Bear Mountain and Breakneck Ridge locations, the high sample size from the Catskills allowed for exploratory site comparisons across that park.

Location	Number	%
Catskills	138	45.6
Bear Mt	87	28.7
Breakneck	78	25.7

Catskills Sites	Number	% of Catskills
Giant Ledge	62	45.0
Blue Hole	32	23.2
Slide	25	18.1
North Point	19	13.8



Total - Knowledge About Specific Area

- When asked how they learned about the hiking area/trail network they were at, half of respondents indicated word of mouth and one-quarter claimed personal knowledge of the area.
- While websites were the primary source of learning of hiking destinations for one-quarter of respondents, 38% of those did not indicate which website they used. Notable mentions are highlighted below:

	Source	Number	%
Primarily: "All Trails" & "Google"	Word of mouth	139	45.9
	Websites	74	24.4
Primarily: "Instagram"	Personal knowledge	71	23.4
	Maps/guidebooks	36	11.9
Primarily: "Family" or "Friend"	Social media	20	6.6
	Newspapers/magazines	4	1.3
	Other	33	10.9

The full list of websites, social media, and other mentions are listed in the Appendix of this report



Total - Who Are Your Hikers?

- Of the hikers completing surveys, roughly half were first-time visitors to their respective parks, with 15% indicating multiple prior visits (5+ times).
- Gender was split with nearly equal representation and most adult age groups were well-represented, two-thirds of whom being 18-45.

Visits	Number	%
0 / First Time	159	52.5
1-2 Times	50	16.5
3-4 Times	34	11.2
5-20 Times	31	10.0
21+ Times	17	5.6

Gender	Number	%
Male	167	52.2
Female	147	46.0

Age	Number	%
< 18	7	2.3
18-29	117	38.6
30-45	102	33.7
46-64	69	22.8
65+	8	2.6

Note: Some respondents chose not to answer gender or age, while a few selected multiple responses to indicate they were there with others.



Total - Purpose of Hiking

- Half of hikers indicated typically going for a 3-hour or less walk vs. a more intensive 4-hour hike or backpacking trip.
- Note that roughly half of respondents indicate “exercise” while half indicate going to “relax” for reasons to go outside. Some gave multiple reasons. The parks, therefore, appeal to a variety of interests.
- Other reasons specified/written-in for going to the parks included: adventure, spending time with friends, fall foliage, and spiritual reasons.

Hike Length	Number	%
3-Hour or Less Walk	165	54.5
4-Plus Hour Hike	106	35.0
Both 3 & 4 Hour	21	6.9
Backpacking Multiple Days at a Time	18	5.9

Purpose	Number	%
Experience nature	196	64.7
Exercise	175	57.8
Have fun	169	55.8
Relax	150	49.5
Escape the city	114	37.6
Family time	56	18.5
Walk the dog	15	5.0

Following this exploratory study, it is recommended not to use “walk” vs “hike” in time-related questions as those are purposive descriptors and can lead to respondent confusion. (i.e. a hiker may have gone for a two-hour intense hike or a 5 hour picnic/leisurely stroll.) In subsequent surveys, it is suggested that “time spent” have an open-ended response, so data can be tabulated in multiple ways (i.e. 1-2 hours vs. a full day).



Total - Purpose of Hiking (Cont'd)

- To further examine the purpose of being at the parks vs. time spent there, data was cross-tabulated. Note the fairly equal distribution of reasons vs. time spent - thusly, respondents can accomplish a variety of purposes at parks in either 0-3 hours or 4+ hours of time and activity is not dependent on time spent in the park.

Hike Length	Number/ %	Exper. Nature	Exercise	Have Fun	Relax	Escape City	Family Time	Walk Dog
3-Hour Walk	N	110	93	94	77	63	32	8
	% of reason	56.1%	53.1%	55.6%	51.3%	55.3%	57.1%	53.3%
4-Hour Hike	N	67	66	56	54	38	20	5
	% of reason	34.2%	37.7%	33.1%	36.0%	33.3%	35.7%	33.3%
3 Or 4 Hours	N	15	14	12	13	8	4	1
	% of reason	7.7%	8.0%	7.1%	8.7%	7.0%	7.1%	6.7%
Backpack Days	N	10	9	12	11	10	0	3
	% of reason	5.1%	5.1%	7.1%	7.3%	8.8%	0.0%	20.0%

*Note: The data above is simply exploratory as respondents were asked a) how long they "typically" hike for and b) why they were outside that particular day. * Some respondents indicating 3- or 4-hour hikes as well as backpacking led data to occasionally total above 100%*



Total - Park Maintenance

- Half of respondents indicated nonprofits/volunteers and park employees maintain the parks - with 7% commenting those who use the trails (hikers) help clean/maintain, too. With one-third of respondents unsure who does maintenance, there is an opportunity to increase branding/messaging and awareness to potentially solicit more support and volunteerism.
- The biggest (though fairly minimal) complaints were litter, too many people, and some unmarked areas of trail - with nearly half indicating no issues or listing positive mentions.

Organization Responsible	#	%	Concern	#	%
Nonprofit groups and volunteers	167	55.1	Litter/dumping	53	17.5
Park employees	152	50.2	Too many people	48	15.8
Other ("hikers/everyone")	21	6.9	Trails aren't clearly marked	38	12.5
No one	5	1.7	Graffiti	26	8.6
Not sure	92	30.4	Trails are eroded	26	8.6
			Dogs (not leashed/waste on trail)	9	2.9
			Not enough people (too secluded)	3	1.0
			No issues OR positive mentions	144	47.5

Total - Park Maintenance

- Hikers wrote in both positive and negative open-ended responses regarding whether any issues needed to be addressed on the trails:

Too much smoking

Lovely

No bathroom at top and mileage mark % to top

Great shape

Just right :)

Better maps online

Keep it up!

Steps eroding

On this given day, it's perfect

More signs/more frequent signs

Mud slide/loose gravel/rocks

Too well-groomed

Beautiful

All great!

Major Welch needs more blazing!!

Trail was good

Bathroom and someplace to sit and have picnic

Need snacks/concession stand



Trail Conference Trail User Survey Comparative Location Data (CLD)

Cross-Tabulation Highlights of:
Breakneck Ridge, Bear Mountain &
Catskill Forest Preserve Locations



CLD - Who Are Your Hikers?

- While hikers to Bear Mountain were a near 50/50 split of return, two-thirds of those going to Breakneck Ridge had previously been there, compared to nearly two-thirds of first-time visitors to the Catskills.
- Word of mouth most led people to Breakneck Ridge, while maps/guidebooks most helped find a hiking location in the Catskills.

Experience	Number / %	Bear (87)	Breakneck (78)	Catskills (138)
Never there before / this was first time	N	47	26	86
	% of location	54.0%	33.3%	62.3%
Was previously there	N	40	52	52
	% of location	46.0%	66.7%	37.7%

Personal knowledge of park/location	N	19	16	36
	% of location	21.8%	20.5%	26.1%
Word of mouth	N	41	49	49
	% of location	47.1%	62.8%	35.5%
Map/guidebook	N	10	6	20
	% of location	11.5%	7.7%	14.5%



CLD - Who Are Your Hikers? (Cont'd)

- Gender was fairly equally split across park locations, but with 17% more males at the Catskills than females and significantly more females visiting Bear Mountain.
- Moreover, the Catskills appears to attract younger visitors while Bear Mountain reported the most hikers 46-65+.

Age		Bear (87)	Breakneck (78)	Catskills (138)
< 18	% of loc.	3.4%	0.0%	2.2%
18-29	% of loc.	35.6%	33.3%	43.5%
30-45	% of loc.	27.6%	38.5%	34.8%
46-64	% of loc.	32.2%	26.9%	14.5%
65+	% of loc.	3.4%	1.3%	2.9%

Age		Bear (87)	Breakneck (78)	Catskills (138)
< 18-45	% of loc.	66.6%	71.8%	80.5%
46-65 +	% of loc.	35.6%	28.2%	17.4%

Gender		Bear (87)	Breakneck (78)	Catskills (138)
Male	% of loc.	41.7%	53.8%	59.4%
Female	% of loc.	59.8%	47.4%	42.0%



CLD - Purpose of Hiking

- Although time spent was comparative across parks, backpackers were more likely to go to the Catskills. Those hiking in the Catskills also indicated higher likelihood to go to relax and experience nature.
- Exercise was the primary reason for going to Breakneck Ridge while family time was reported highest amongst those at Bear Mountain.

Length		Bear (87)	Breakneck (78)	Catskills (138)	Purpose		Bear (87)	Breakneck (78)	Catskills (138)
3-Hour or Less Walk	% of loc.	56.3%	55.1%	52.9%	Relax	% of loc.	40.2%	42.3%	59.4%
4-Plus Hour Hike	% of loc.	34.5%	41.0%	31.9%	Have fun	% of loc.	50.6%	59.0%	57.2%
Both 3 & 4 Hours	% of loc.	8.0%	2.6%	8.7%	Escape the city	% of loc.	33.3%	41.0%	38.4%
Backpack Multiple Days	% of loc.	2.3%	3.8%	9.4%	Experience nature	% of loc.	59.8%	64.1%	68.1%
					Exercise	% of loc.	63.2%	67.9%	48.6%
					Family time	% of loc.	25.3%	12.8%	17.4%
					Walk the dog	% of loc.	6.9%	5.1%	3.6%



CLD - Park Maintenance

- Comparatively, Bear Mountain was perceived to be most maintained by nonprofits and volunteers, while Breakneck Ridge was most perceived to be maintained by park employees. The Catskills drew most confusion regarding maintenance.
- While Bear Mountain had the most comments of litter/dumping, Breakneck Ridge received significantly higher mentions of having too many people and graffiti.

Organization Responsible		Bear (87)	BrkNk (78)	CSK (138)
Nonprofit groups and volunteers	% of loc.	64.4%	55.1%	49.3%
Park employees	% of loc.	50.6%	57.7%	45.7%
Other (“hikers/everyone”)	% of loc.	8.1%	7.7%	6.5%
No one	% of loc.	1.1%	3.8%	0.7%
Not sure	% of loc.	24.1%	24.4%	37.7%

Concern		Bear (87)	BrkNk (78)	CSK (138)
Litter/dumping	% of loc.	25.3%	17.9%	11.6%
Too many people	% of loc.	14.9%	26.9%	10.1%
Trails aren’t clearly marked	% of loc.	9.2%	17.9%	11.6%
Graffiti	% of loc.	2.3%	23.1%	4.3%
Trails are eroded	% of loc.	9.2%	11.5%	6.5%
Dogs (not leashed/waste on trail)	% of loc.	2.2%	2.6%	3.6%
Not enough people (too secluded)	% of loc.	0.0%	1.3%	1.4%



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Trail Conference Trail User Survey Comparative Catskills Site Data (CCSD)

Cross-Tabulation Highlights of:
Blue Hole, Giant Ledge, North Point &
Slide Mountain



CCSD - Park Maintenance

- Comparatively, North Point & Slide were perceived to be most maintained by non-profits and volunteers, while North Point was also viewed to be cared for by park employees (similarly to Giant Ledge).
- Conversely, more than half of those at Blue Hole were unsure who maintained the site.
- Litter was most problematic at Blue Hole, with graffiti most mentioned at Slide.
- Giant Ledge and North Point received most mentions of trails not being clearly marked.

Organization Responsible		Blue Hole (32)	Giant Ledge (62)	North Point (19)	Slide (25)
Nonprofit groups & volunteers	% of loc.	25.0%	45.2%	73.7%	72.0%
Park employees	% of loc.	31.3%	51.6%	57.9%	40.0%
Other (“hikers/everyone”)	% of loc.	12.5%	1.6%	10.5%	8.0%
No one	% of loc.	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Not sure	% of loc.	53.1%	38.7%	15.8%	32.0%

Concern		Blue Hole (32)	Giant Ledge (62)	North Point (19)	Slide (25)
Litter/dumping	% of loc.	28.1%	6.5%	10.5%	8.0%
Too many people	% of loc.	12.5%	14.5%	5.3%	0.0%
Trails aren’t clearly marked	% of loc.	3.1%	14.5%	21.1%	8.0%
Graffiti	% of loc.	3.1%	1.6%	0.0%	16.0%
Trails are eroded	% of loc.	6.3%	8.1%	5.3%	4.0%
Dogs (not leashed / waste on trail)	% of loc.	0.0%	6.5%	5.3%	0.0%
Not enough people (too secluded)	% of loc.	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%



CCSD - Purpose of Hiking

- Maps/guidebooks were most used to locate the Slide and Giant Ledge locations in the Catskills.
- Hikers went to Slide most to relax, whereas North Point (followed by Giant Ledge) received highest mentions for experiencing nature and exercising.
- Conversely, Blue Hole was significantly least mentioned for exercise but was most mentioned for those going for family time.

Purpose		Blue Hole (32)	Giant Ledge (62)	North Point (19)	Slide (25)
Maps/guidebooks	% of loc.	3.1%	17.7%	5.3%	28.0%
Relax	% of loc.	46.9%	54.8%	68.4%	80.0%
Have fun	% of loc.	43.8%	59.7%	63.2%	64.0%
Escape the city	% of loc.	28.1%	40.3%	47.4%	40.0%
Experience nature	% of loc.	37.5%	77.4%	84.2%	72.0%
Exercise	% of loc.	9.4%	61.3%	73.7%	48.0%
Family time	% of loc.	31.3%	12.9%	15.8%	12.0%
Walk the dog	% of loc.	0.0%	4.8%	10.5%	0.0%



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Trail Conference Trail User Survey Appendix



Appendix A (Websites)

Total - Knowledge About Specific Area

Source / Website	N	%
"Websites" indicated but not specified	28	9.2
All Trails	13	4.3
Bear Mountain / Bear Mtn Hikes	2	0.6
Blogs	1	0.3
Catskill Hikers	1	0.3
Catskill Mountaineer	1	0.3
DEC	1	0.3
Google	12	4
Hiking in Hudson Valley	5	1.7
Meetup	1	0.3
NYSDEC/Hiking	1	0.3
NY/NJ Hikers	1	0.3
NYNJ Trails / Trail Conference	4	1.3
NYS Parks	1	0.3
Trip Advisor	1	0.3
Woodland Valley Campground	1	0.3



Appendix B (Social Media)

Total - Knowledge About Specific Area

Social Media	N	%
“Social Media” mentioned but not specified	9	3
Catskill Trail Con	1	0.3
Facebook / Facebook group	2	0.6
Instagram	5	1.7
Meetup	1	0.3
Yelp	1	0.3
YouTube	1	0.3



Appendix C (Other)

Total - Knowledge About Specific Area

Other Mentions	N	%
A.T. Hiker Grapevine	1	0.3
ATC	1	0.3
Campground	1	0.3
Church group	1	0.3
Drove by	1	0.3
Family (BIL, Fiance, Girlfriend, Parents)	5	1.5
Friend	10	3.3
GAIAGPS.com	1	0.3
HVH Meetup & Saw on Avenza Map	1	0.3
I Love NY ad	1	0.3
Trail Conference	1	0.3
Hudson River Valley Ramble	1	0.3
School	3	1
Tinder date	1	0.3
Told to	1	0.3
Tour guide	3	1