

Children's "Outdoor Bill of Rights" Survey

Acknowledgements

This survey was inspired by work of the Winneshiek County Conservation Board that was funded by the Iowa Association of Naturalists. Special thanks to Marissa Nordschow for her initial work and all her assistance on the development of this survey. The Aquatic Education Program funded development, distribution, and summary of the survey. We are supported by Sport Fish Restoration monies and the Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund (fishing and hunting licenses).

Purpose

The Iowa DNR Aquatic Education Program hosted a web-based survey to get feedback from interested Iowans to initiate development of a common "list" of activities all children should have an opportunity to participate in by the time they are 18 years of age. These should be activities that conservation agencies and organizations, youth groups, schools, parents, and others can collaborate on to provide opportunities for all children to participate.

Distribution

A link to the survey was emailed through education and conservation networks and a link was provided on the DNR web site. The survey was announced via two Department press releases as well. The survey was open from December 10, 2008 through January 16, 2009.

Results

Almost 1700 people took the survey and cast their vote. Following is a brief overview of the results of that survey:

Respondents:

- Respondents are people who tend to be outside. When asked to describe themselves, most said they were "outside when weather permits" (36%) or "outside as much as possible in any kind of weather" (40%). (See figure 1.)
- More than 1700 individuals completed the survey. 1695 respondents from Iowa (as determined by zip code of residence) voted for outdoor activities all Iowa children should have the opportunity to participate in.
- 56.5% of respondents were female; 43.5% were male.
- 38% aged 30-45, 34% aged 46-60 years.
- Represented 420 Iowa zip codes.
- Come from a variety of professions – engineer, teacher, farmer, student, truck driver, construction, stay-at-home parents...
- Almost all respondents have visited a state, county, or city park within the last 12 months. (See figure 2.)
- Males were more apt to "visit/explore regularly" streams, interior rivers, and oak-hickory forests.

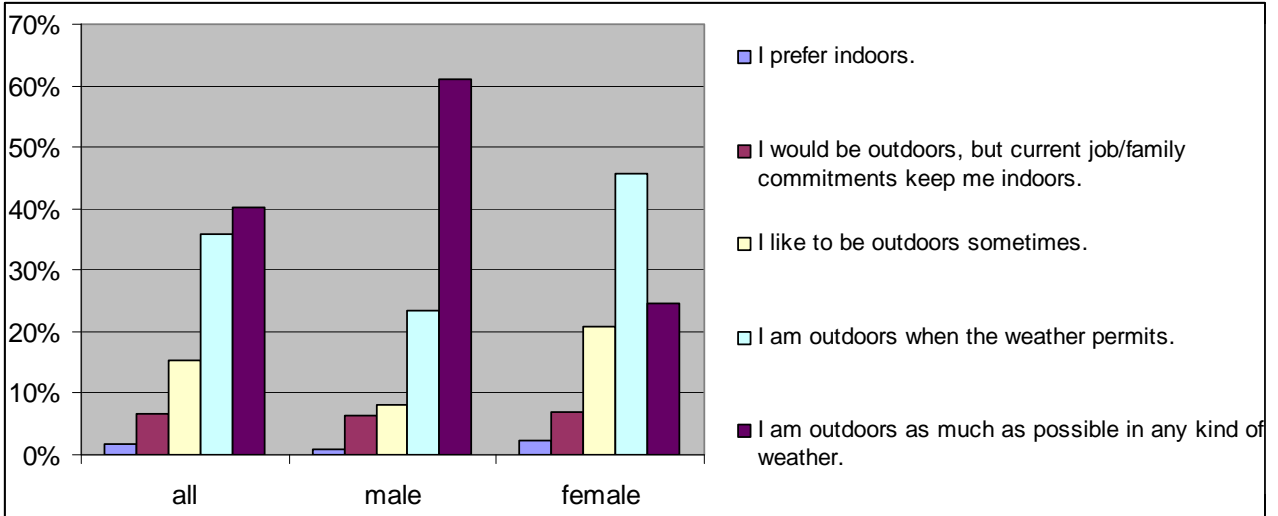


Figure 1: Respondents' descriptions of self when asked, "Which of the following statements best describe you?"

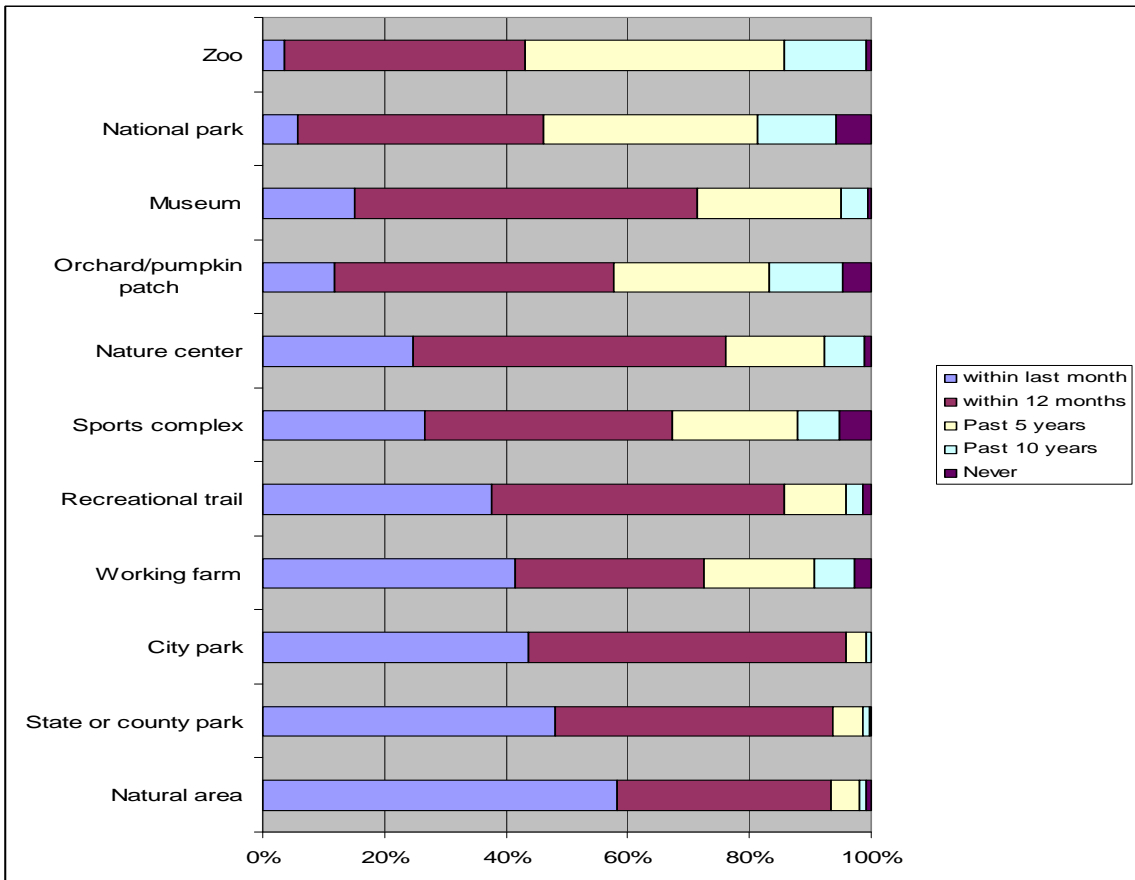


Figure 2: Respondent visitation to various types of venues

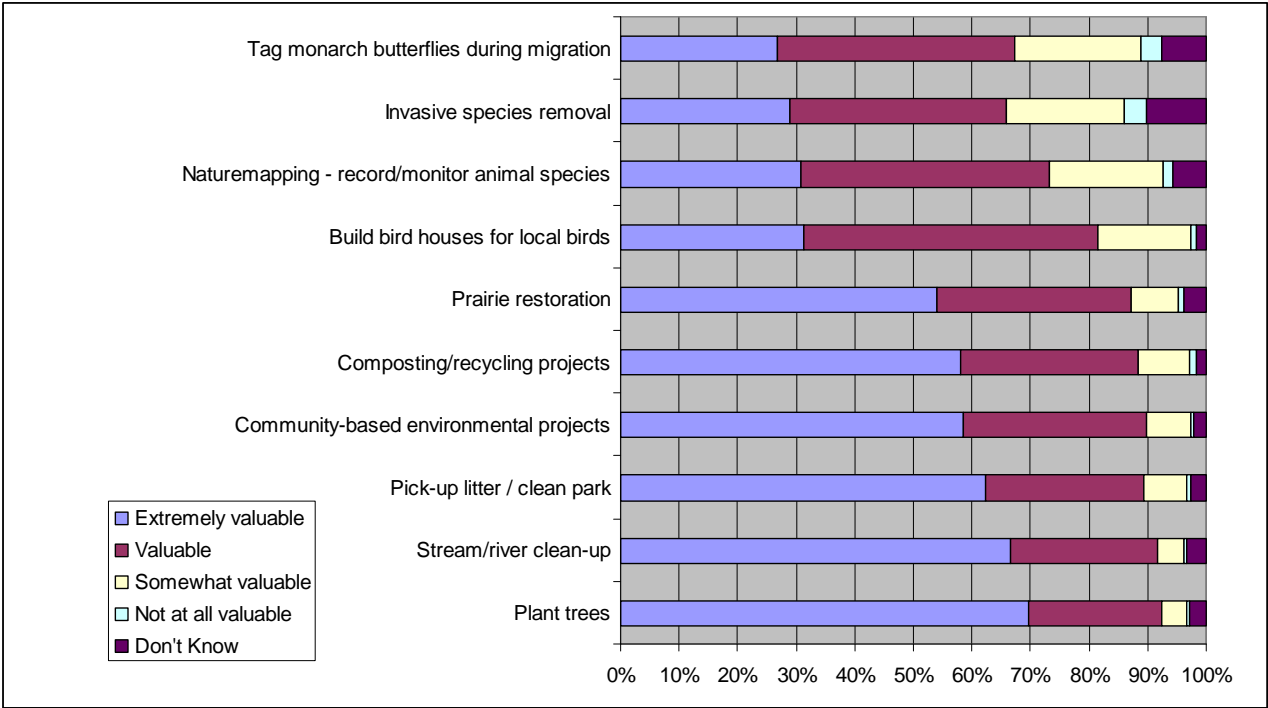


Figure 3: Respondents perceived value of various activities to participants.

Meaningful Childhood Activities

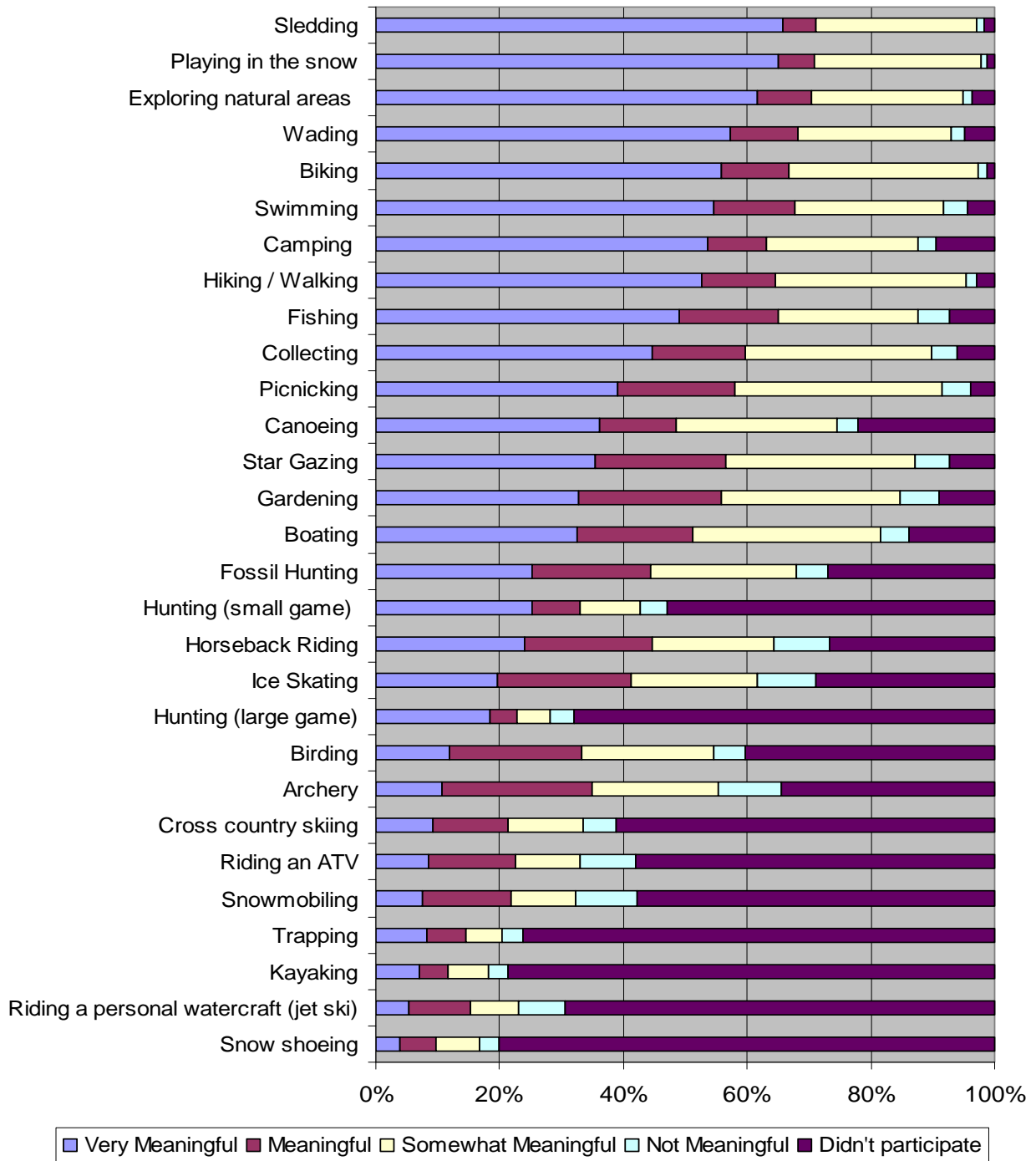


Figure 4: Childhood activities ranked according to how meaningful they were to survey respondents.

Respondent's Opinions

- More than half of the respondents considered planting trees, clean-ups, community-based and environmental projects, and prairie restoration projects to be “extremely valuable” to children/youth who participate in these experiences. (See figure 3.)
- Childhood activities respondents considered most valuable included sledding, playing in the snow, exploring natural areas, wading, biking, swimming, camping, hiking/walking, and fishing (considered “very meaningful” by at least half of the respondents). See figure 4. [Note: Time of year the survey was conducted may have influenced the ranking of the top two.]
- Ranking of activities “all Iowa children should have the opportunity to participate in” varied by age and gender, but the top twelve activities remained the same for all groups. (See figure 5 and Table 1.) More than half of respondents thought all Iowa children should have the opportunity to:
 - Camp in a tent,
 - Learn to swim,
 - Catch a fish,
 - Grow something,
 - Hike in a natural area, and
 - Explore nature.
- More than 4/10 respondents also suggested Iowa children should also:
 - Visit a working farm,
 - Explore a stream,
 - Paddle a canoe/kayak, and
 - Ride a bike.
- Childhood activities considered to be meaningful varied by gender:
 - 49% of males considered hunting small game very meaningful; 79% of females did not participate.
 - 35% of males considered hunting large game very meaningful; 87% of females did not participate.
 - 26.3% of males considered archery “meaningful” and 18% considered it “very meaningful,” but 43% of females did not participate (almost double the male rate for non-participation).
 - More women considered swimming, hiking/walking, biking, sledding, picnicking, horseback riding, gardening, and stargazing “very meaningful.”

Tally of votes per activity

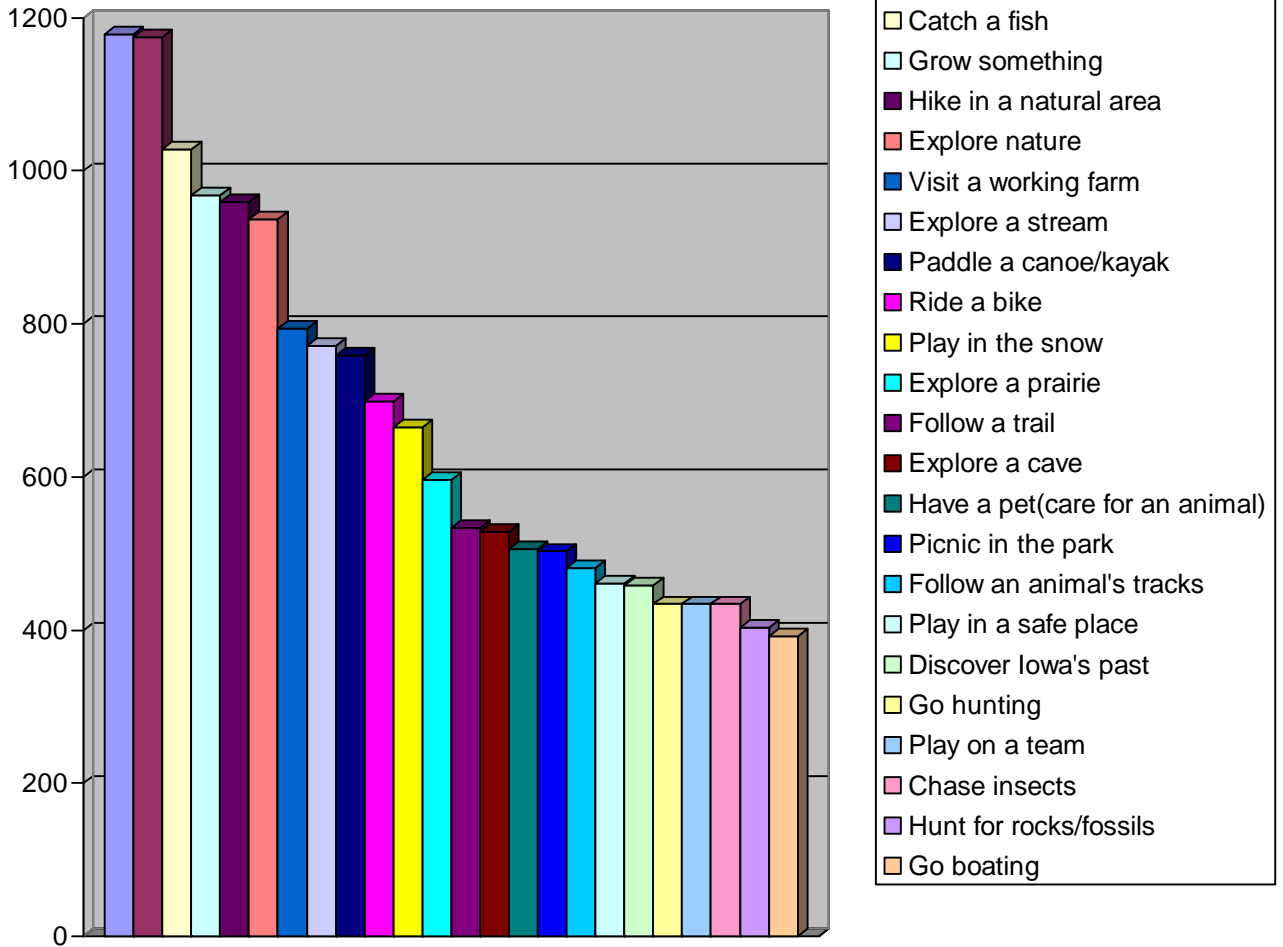


Figure 5: Selected activities all Iowa children should have the opportunity to participate in before age 18.

Table 1: Tally of votes and percent of respondents voting for various activities included in the “Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights” survey.

Rank	Activity	Votes	Percent
1	Camp in a tent	1178	69%
2	Learn to swim	1175	69%
3	Catch a fish	1028	61%
4	Grow something	968	57%
5	Hike in a natural area	959	57%
6	Explore nature	937	55%
7	Visit a working farm	794	47%
8	Explore a stream	772	46%
9	Paddle a canoe/kayak	759	45%
10	Ride a bike	699	41%
11	Play in the snow	665	39%
12	Explore a prairie	596	35%
13	Follow a trail	534	32%
14	Explore a cave	529	31%
15	Have a pet(care for an animal)	506	30%
16	Picnic in the park	503	30%
17	Follow an animal's tracks	481	28%
18	Play in a safe place	461	27%
19	Discover Iowa's past	459	27%
20	Go hunting	434	26%
21	Play on a team	434	26%
22	Chase insects	434	26%
23	Hunt for rocks/fossils	403	24%
24	Go boating	392	23%
25	Jump in a pile of leaves	434	26%
26	Hunt for mushrooms/edible plants	377	22%
27	Go birding	316	19%
28	Splash in the water	297	18%
29	Celebrate their heritage	291	17%
30	Fly a kite	248	15%
31	Ice skate(outdoors)	211	12%

Table 1 continued

Rank	Activity	Votes	Percent
32	Trapping	8	0%
32	Explore sky	8	0%
34	Horseback riding	6	0%
35	Survival techniques	3	0%
35	Environment Cleanup Education	3	0%
35	Explore wetland	3	0%
38	Ski	2	0%
38	Archery/Shooting Sports	2	0%
38	Visit a nature center	2	0%
38	Geocaching	2	0%
38	Explore forest	2	0%
43	Snowmobile	1	0%
43	Attend a safety class	1	0%
43	TAPROOT	1	0%
43	Scout troop	1	0%
43	Frisbee	1	0%
43	Outdoor Arts/Music	1	0%
43	Museum	1	0%
43	Flora & Fauna	1	0%
43	Campfire	1	0%
43	Disc golf	1	0%
43	Maintain/build trail	1	0%
43	Competitive Cycling	1	0%
43	Terracaching	1	0%
43	Climb tree	1	0%
43	Build fort	1	0%
43	Play for play sake	1	0%
43	Learn about threatened/endangered species	1	0%
43	Visit an organic farm	1	0%

Next Steps

The results of the survey will be distributed to those who participated; those who have indicated interest in working together to further development of opportunities for youth; and finally, to a wide array of conservation, health, and youth interests.