

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research  
Publications

Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research

---

1-1-1995

### Wildlife Viewing in Montana: An Overview

Nancy Lee Menning

*The University of Montana-Missoula*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr\\_pubs](https://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr_pubs)



Part of the [Leisure Studies Commons](#), [Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration Commons](#), and the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

#### Recommended Citation

Menning, Nancy Lee, "Wildlife Viewing in Montana: An Overview" (1995). *Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research Publications*. 204.

[https://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr\\_pubs/204](https://scholarworks.umt.edu/itrr_pubs/204)

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

**WILDLIFE VIEWING IN MONTANA**

**AN OVERVIEW**

# **WILDLIFE VIEWING IN MONTANA**

## **AN OVERVIEW**

by  
**Nancy Lee Menning**

Technical Completion Report 95-1

Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research  
School of Forestry  
The University of Montana  
Missoula, Montana 59812  
(406) 243-5686

January 1995

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**This report was prepared using data collected by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research during the course of three surveys.**

**The data collection efforts were funded by  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
and Montana's Lodging Facility Use Tax.**

**Additional support and assistance were provided  
by other state and federal agencies.**

**Above all, the author acknowledges the many residents and visitors  
who responded to our surveys, thus making this analysis possible.**

# WILDLIFE VIEWING IN MONTANA: AN OVERVIEW

## INTRODUCTION

During 1993, the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) conducted three studies that addressed issues regarding wildlife viewing in Montana. This report highlights some results of those studies. Additional information regarding wildlife viewing in Montana is available from ITRR.

## DATA SOURCES

In addition to the 1991 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation<sup>1</sup>, ITRR data sources referred to in the following pages are:

- **1993 Nonresident Travel Survey**  
→ distributed to 11,457 travel groups throughout 1993; 5,239 groups (46%) responded.
- **1993 Nonresident Wildlife Viewing Survey**  
→ distributed to 4,626 travel groups between July and October 1993; 2,216 (48%) responded.
- **Summer 1993 Resident Wildlife Viewing Survey**  
→ mailed to 3,378 Montana residents in September 1993 to collect information about wildlife viewing activity between June 1 and August 31; 1,462 (43%) responded.

ITRR distributed the 1993 Nonresident Travel Survey to a representative sample of travelers statewide.

The 1993 Nonresident Wildlife Viewing Survey was distributed at eight entrances to the state, which accounted for 53% of nonresident travel into the state during the four-month sample period; results from this study may not accurately reflect the entire nonresident travel population.

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1993. *1991 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

ITRR did not conduct a nonresponse bias check for the two nonresident surveys; however, frontend data were compared to survey responses and adjustments made to better reflect the nonresident traveler population.

As part of the resident study, ITRR conducted a telephone survey with a sample of mail survey nonrespondents; adjusted mail survey results reflect the entire Montana population.

## FORMAT OF THIS REPORT

In the following pages, wildlife viewing in Montana is portrayed by considering the characteristics, behaviors, and preferences of resident and nonresident wildlife viewers. In particular, this report presents information on:

- national trends in wildlife viewing participation,
- relationships between wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing participation nationwide and by Montana residents,
- wildlife viewing participation in Montana by residents and nonresidents,
- characteristics of resident and nonresident wildlife viewers,
- resident and nonresident preferences for wildlife viewing area characteristics, and
- resident support for wildlife viewing program emphases and funding options.

## DEFINITIONS

Although definitions differ slightly among the various data sources, the following terms are used throughout this report:

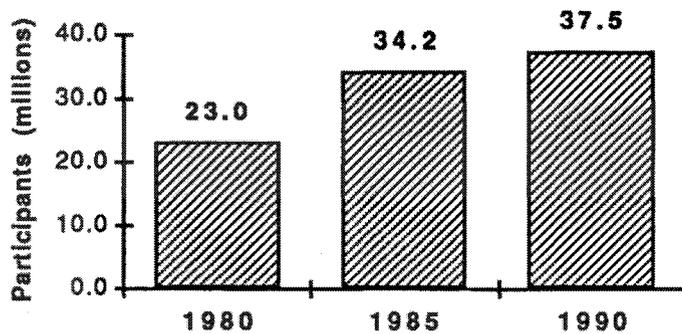
- **Primary viewing trips** – trips more than one mile from the participant's home where one of the major trip purposes was viewing wildlife.
- **Secondary viewing trips** – trips more than one mile from the participant's home where viewing wildlife was not a major purpose but on which the person also enjoyed seeing wildlife.
- **Residential viewing** – closely observing or trying to identify wildlife around the home or neighborhood.

# NATIONAL TRENDS IN WILDLIFE VIEWING, 1980-1990

Data Source: 1991 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.

Values presented are given by USFWS for determining trends and are less accurate than figures reported by USFWS for single-year participation.

**Primary viewing trip participants,  
persons six years old and older, United States**



---

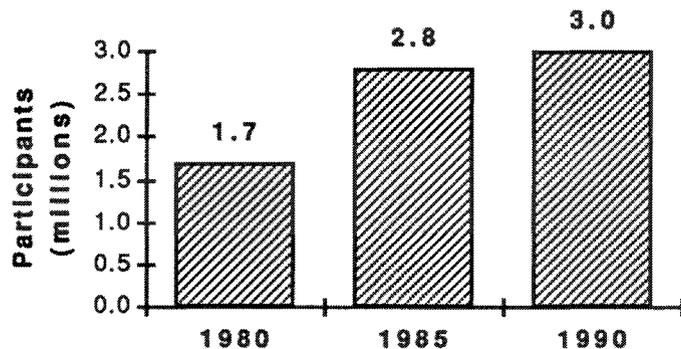
---

*The U.S. population six years old and older grew 10% between 1980 and 1990. During this same time, persons taking primary viewing trips increased 63%.*

---

---

**Primary viewing trip participants,  
persons six years old and older, Mountain States**



---

---

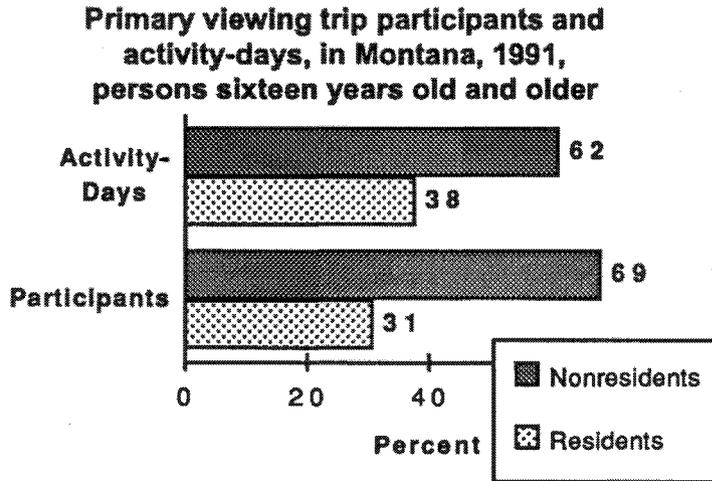
*In the Mountain states, the population six years old and older grew 20% between 1980 and 1990. Persons taking primary viewing trips increased 76% during the same time.*

---

---

# WILDLIFE VIEWING IN MONTANA, 1991, BY RESIDENTS AND NONRESIDENTS

*Data Source: 1991 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.*



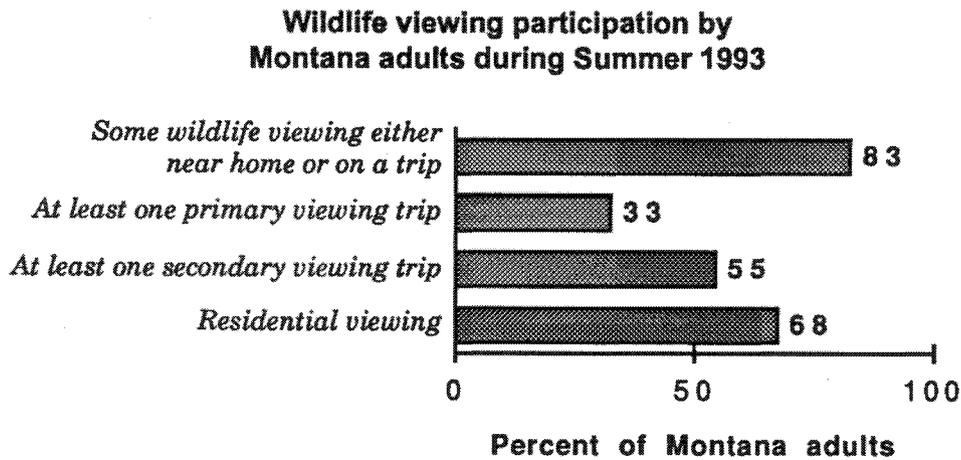

---

*Montana residents accounted for 173,000 of 558,000 (31%) participants and 1.64 million of 4.32 million (38%) activity-days for primary viewing trips occurring within Montana during 1991.*

---

## RESIDENT PARTICIPATION IN WILDLIFE VIEWING, SUMMER 1993

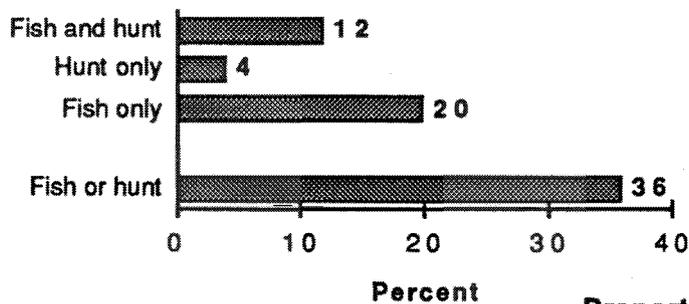
*Data Source: Summer 1993 Resident Wildlife Viewing Survey.  
Participation figures are for activity between June 1 and August 31, 1993.*



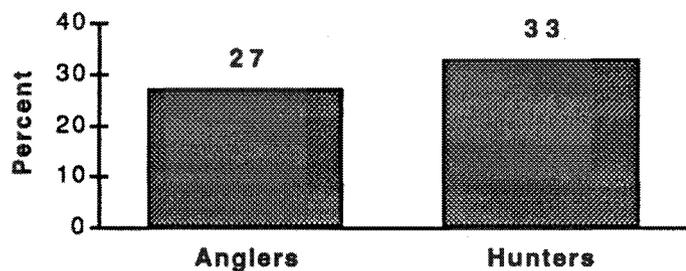
# RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARTICIPATION IN WILDLIFE VIEWING, HUNTING, AND FISHING

*Data Sources: National data is from the 1991 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation; Montana participation data is from the Summer 1993 Resident Wildlife Viewing Survey.*

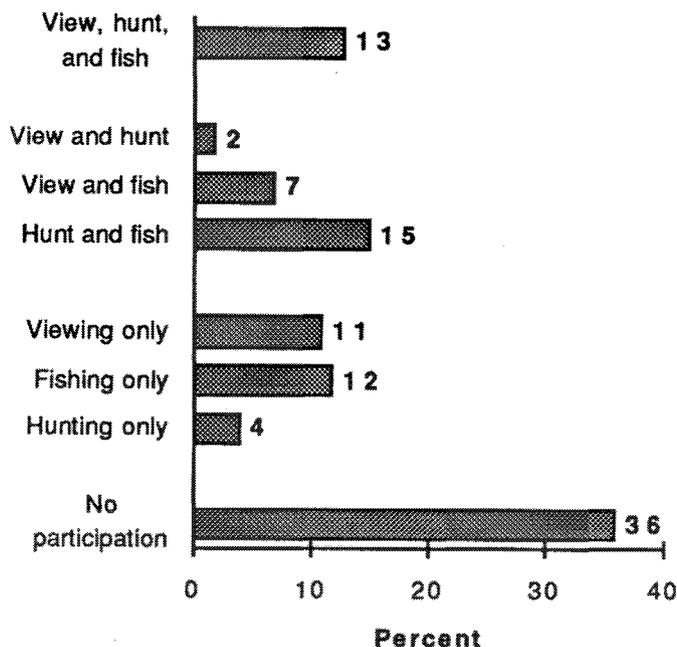
**Proportion of primary viewing trip participants who also hunt or fish, United States, 1991**



**Proportion of anglers and hunters who also took primary viewing trips, United States, 1991**



**Proportion of Montana residents who participate in primary viewing trips, angling, or hunting\***




---

*Many persons, both in Montana and nationwide, participate in multiple forms of wildlife-oriented recreation.*

---

*\* For Montana participation data, angling and hunting refer to participation during the 12 months preceding the survey, while primary viewing trip participation is for the summer of 1993 only.*

# WILDLIFE VIEWING BY NONRESIDENT VISITORS

Data Source: 1993 Nonresident Travel Survey.

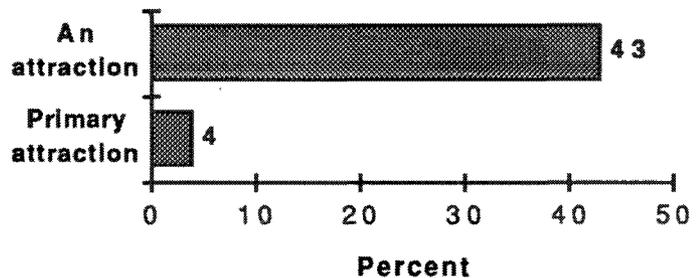
Attractions are reported for nonresident travel groups who were in Montana for vacation or recreation (as opposed to shopping, business, or just passing through).

Activity participation reflects participation in wildlife viewing by one or more travel group members at some time during their visit to Montana.

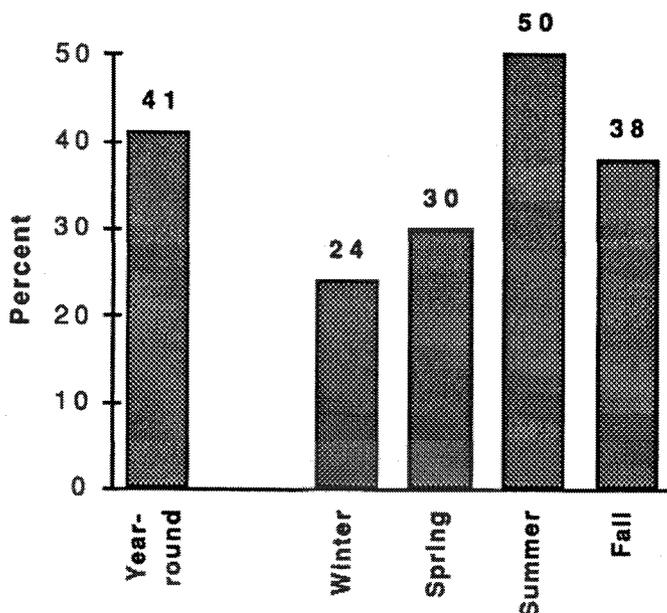
Viewing wildlife ranked second as an attraction for vacation travel to Montana; only scenery was reported more often (77% compared to 43%).

While only 4% of vacation travel groups cited wildlife viewing as the primary opportunity attracting them to Montana, only scenery (at 53%) was cited by substantially more travel groups. (A number of recreation opportunities were cited by 3 to 7% of travel groups as their primary attraction.)

Wildlife viewing as an attraction for visitors to Montana, 1993 (vacation/recreation travel groups only)



Wildlife viewing participation rates\* for visitors to Montana, 1993



41% of nonresident travel groups looked for or watched wildlife while in Montana. Of all activities monitored by ITRR, participation rates were higher only for driving for pleasure (cited by 46% of nonresident travelers).

\* In this study, participation was assessed by whether travel groups indicated that they had watched or looked for wildlife while in Montana. No distinction was made between primary and secondary viewing trips.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF RESIDENT AND NONRESIDENT WILDLIFE VIEWERS IN MONTANA

Data Sources: Summer 1993 Resident Wildlife Viewing Survey and 1993 Nonresident Travel Survey.

## Characteristics of resident primary viewing trip participants compared to other Montanans

	Montana adult residents	
	Primary viewing trip participants*	Those not taking a primary viewing trip
Male:female ratio	52:48	47:53
Percent with at least some schooling beyond high school	70%	64%
Average (mean) age	45 years	51 years
Average (mean) percent of life spent in Montana	66%	76%
Percent living in western or southwestern Montana (Glacier, Gold West, or Yellowstone Countries)	63%	45%

Note: No statistically significant difference was found in annual household incomes between participants in primary viewing trips and nonparticipants.

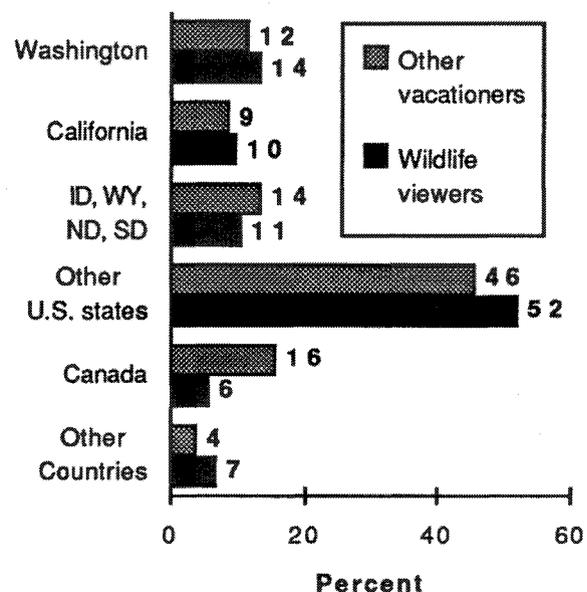
\* Participation is based upon primary viewing trips occurring between June 1 and August 31, 1993.

Compared to Montanans who did not take a primary wildlife viewing trip during summer 1993, primary trip participants were slightly more likely to be male and to reside in western Montana. On average, they were younger, had lived less of their life in Montana, and had somewhat more education.

Only 4% of travelers who visited Montana for vacation or recreation in 1993 indicated that wildlife viewing was the primary attraction. On many variables – including length of stay, expenditures, group size and type, education, income, repeat visitation, and intent to visit again – these wildlife viewers were similar to other vacationers.

However, more wildlife viewers were from states other than Washington, California, and Montana's neighbors (Idaho, Wyoming, and the Dakotas), suggesting more destination-oriented travel with widespread national interest. Although Canadian visitation for wildlife viewing was low, other foreign travelers were attracted by Montana's wildlife viewing opportunities.

Origin of nonresident wildlife viewers compared to other vacationers

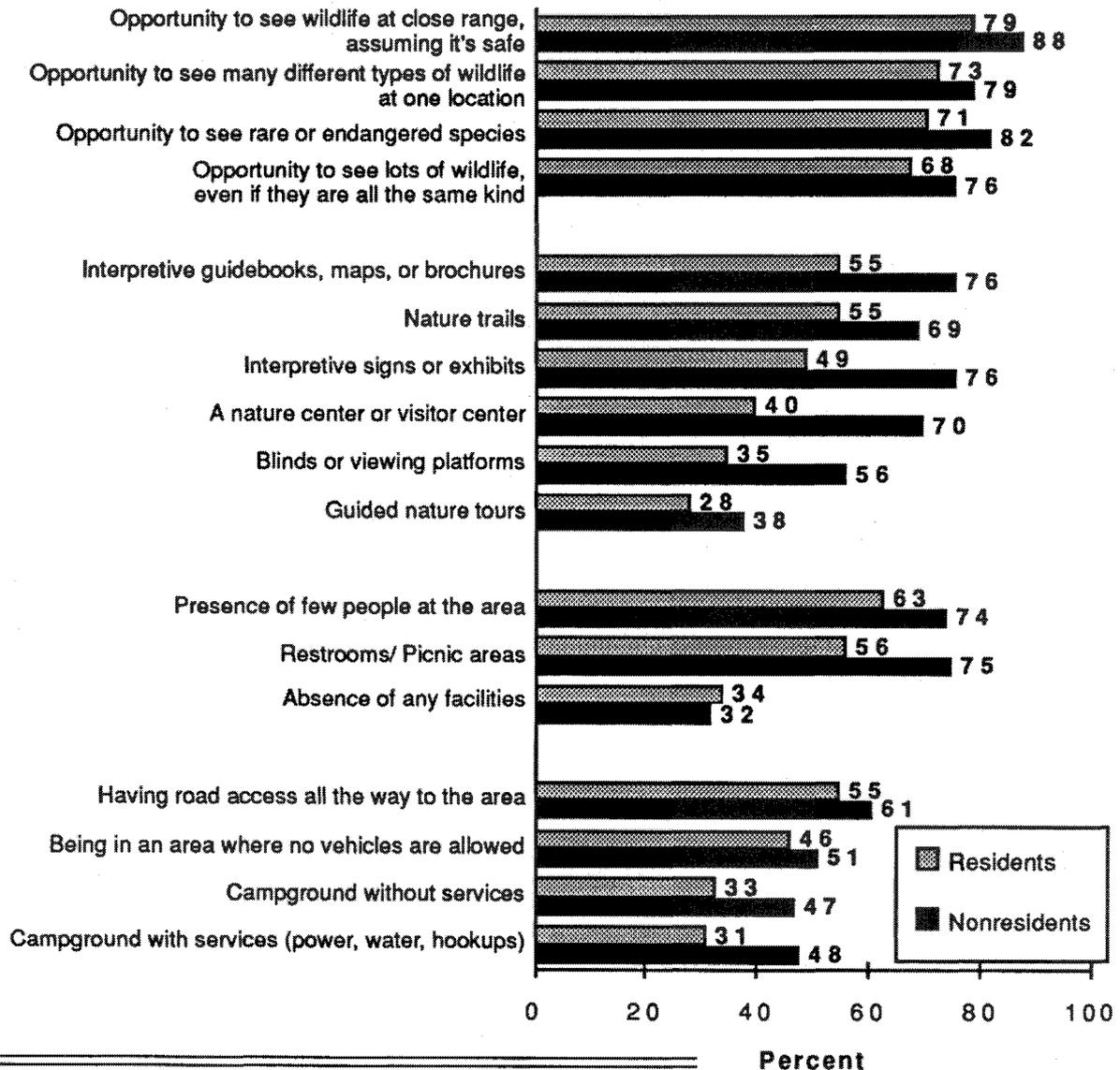


# RESIDENT AND NONRESIDENT PREFERENCES FOR WILDLIFE VIEWING AREA FEATURES AND CHARACTERISTICS

*Data Sources: 1993 Nonresident Wildlife Viewing Survey and  
Summer 1993 Resident Wildlife Viewing Survey.*

*Respondents rated the desirability of the following features and characteristics  
at their "ideal" place to view wildlife.*

## Proportion rating viewing area features and characteristics as "very" or "moderately" desirable



*In general, nonresidents found viewing area features and characteristics more desirable than did residents. This trend was particularly pronounced with regard to interpretive services.*

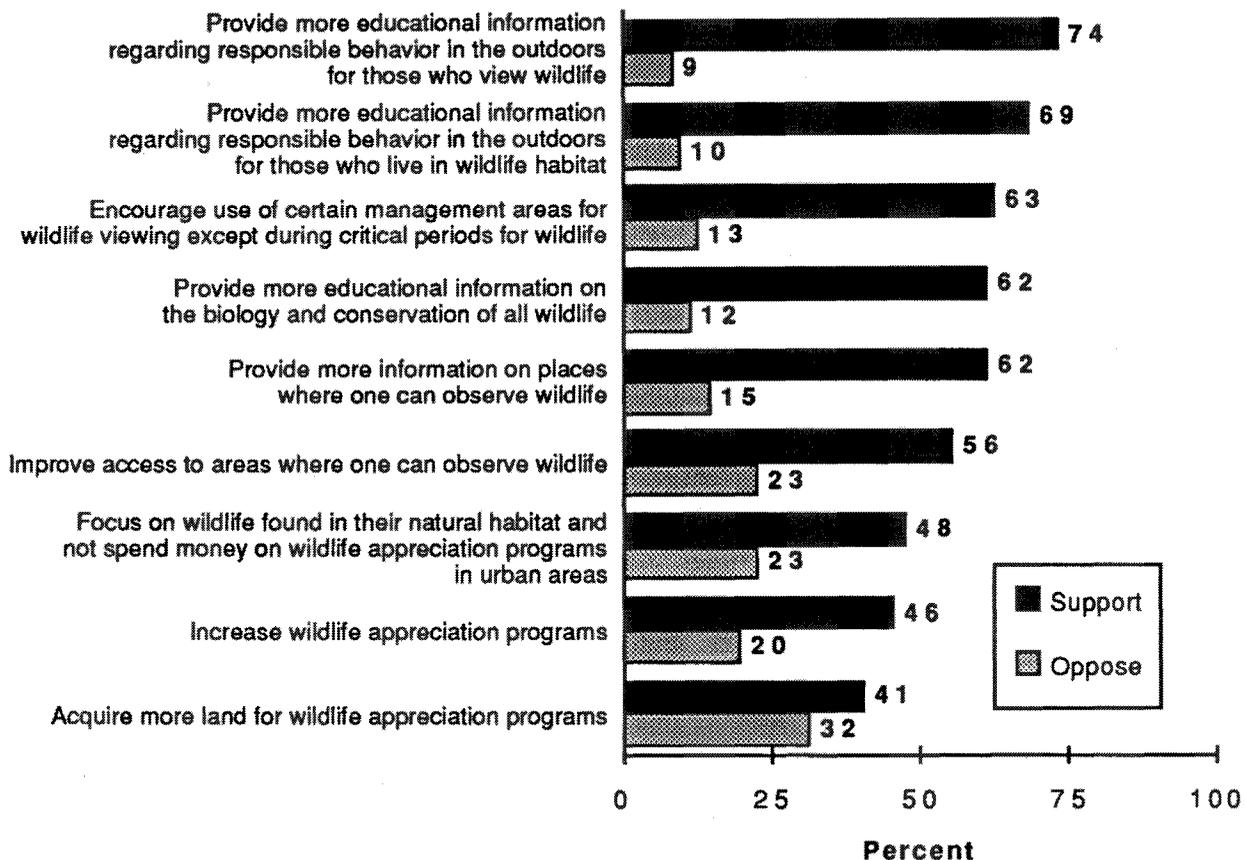
# RESIDENT SUPPORT FOR THE WILDLIFE VIEWING PROGRAM

Data Source: Summer 1993 Resident Wildlife Viewing Survey.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for possible management actions.

Support and opposition bars do not add to 100 percent because some respondents either had no opinion or were neutral toward particular actions.

## Proportion of Montana residents supporting and opposing possible wildlife viewing program actions




---

*All possible actions included by ITRR in their survey of Montana residents received more support than opposition. However, three actions — acquiring land; increasing wildlife appreciation programs; and focusing on natural, rather than urban, habitats — failed to be supported by a majority of respondents.*

---

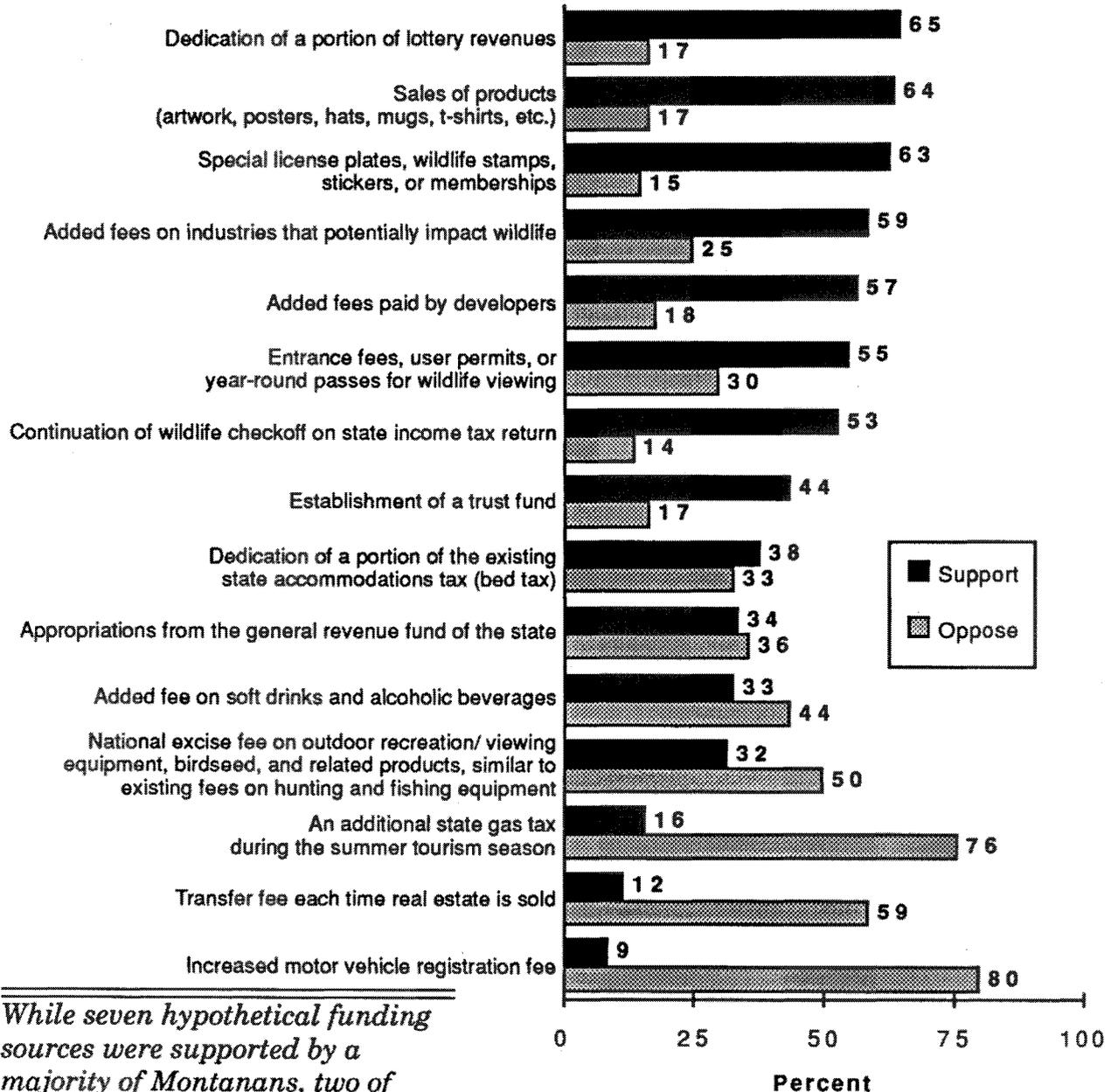
# RESIDENT SUPPORT FOR WILDLIFE VIEWING PROGRAM FUNDING OPTIONS

Data Source: Summer 1993 Resident Wildlife Viewing Survey.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for hypothetical sources of funding to be dedicated to Montana's wildlife viewing programs.

Support and opposition bars do not add to 100 percent because some respondents either had no opinion or were neutral toward particular funding sources.

## Proportion of Montana residents supporting and opposing hypothetical wildlife viewing program funding sources



*While seven hypothetical funding sources were supported by a majority of Montanans, two of these – added fees on industries and entrance fees to viewing areas – also had substantial opposition.*

# CONSERVATION LICENSE FUNDING FOR THE WILDLIFE VIEWING PROGRAM

*Data Source: Summer 1993 Resident Wildlife Viewing Survey.  
Responses are for Montana hunters, anglers, and trappers only.*

---

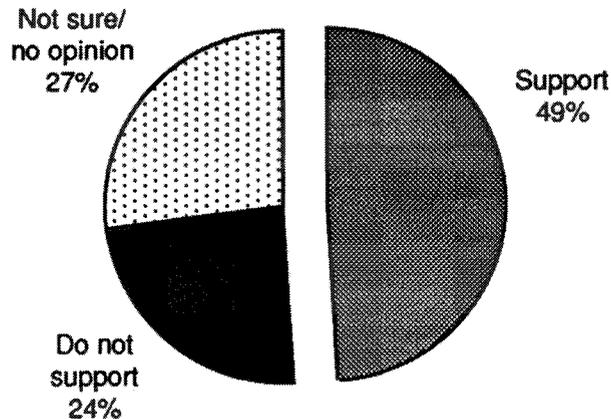
---

*All residents were asked to indicate their support for or opposition to the funding options reported on the previous page. In addition, ITRR asked respondents who were hunters, anglers, or trappers to indicate if they supported the use of a portion of the funding from the purchase of the Conservation License to support wildlife viewing programs.*

---

---

## Hunter, angler, and trapper support for use of Conservation License funding for wildlife viewing programs



---

## SUMMARY

---

Results presented in this report support the following statements:

- Wildlife viewing is a rapidly-growing recreational activity, with primary viewing trip participation growing faster than population in the Rocky Mountains and throughout the United States.
- Eight out of ten Montana adults participate in some form of wildlife viewing.
- Nationwide, one in three primary viewing trip participants also hunt or fish. In Montana, this ratio increases to two in three.
- Opportunities to view wildlife are an important characteristic attracting nonresident visitors to Montana. Participation in wildlife viewing by visitors is exceeded only by participation in driving for pleasure.
- Montanans who participate in primary viewing trips tend to be younger, to have more formal education, to be newer residents of the state, and to live in western Montana.
- Nonresident travelers are substantially more interested in interpretive materials and facilities than Montana residents.
- Montanans support informational and educational wildlife viewing program actions more than land acquisition; several sources to help fund Montana's wildlife viewing program were supported by a majority of residents.
- About half of Montana's hunters, anglers, and trappers would support using Conservation License funding for the wildlife viewing program; one-quarter were undecided and one-quarter would not support such use.