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The culture of the wild: An exploration of the meanings and values associated with wilderness recreation in New Zealand

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Lincoln University

by K.A Wray

Lincoln University 2009
Abstract

In the latter half of the 20th Century, New Zealand’s wilderness resource developed iconic status at the national and international scales, and now represents highly significant social, cultural, political, ecological and economic value. In the early 21st Century, however, social changes such as urbanisation, globalisation, increasing consumerism and growing international tourism may be eroding the traditional values and practices which underpin New Zealand’s wilderness heritage. This study explores the complex phenomenon of wilderness in contemporary New Zealand society through the eyes of wilderness users and, in doing so, addresses a significant gap in the research literature. The research was undertaken in Fiordland National Park (considered to be New Zealand’s largest remaining expanse of ‘wilderness’). A combination of qualitative research diaries and in-depth interviews were used to address questions such as: ‘what does wilderness mean?’, ‘why is it important to those who venture within it?’ and ‘how is it being affected by social and environmental changes?’

Findings demonstrate that wilderness is a multi-faceted (yet fragile) concept, at the heart of which lies a set of unique dimensions common to the experiences of most users. Respondents displayed strong attachments to the wilderness resource, and many expressed concern about the impacts of external influences (such as international tourism, commercialisation and technological advancements) on the wilderness as they knew it. Discussions with participants indicate that the protection of wilderness is extremely important to New Zealand society for social and cultural (as well as ecological and economic) reasons. Wilderness in New Zealand represents an historical affinity with the land and the natural environment, and is viewed by many as a cultural icon. Wilderness provides important connections to a proud pioneering heritage - a legacy interpreted as a gift to future generations. In a broader sense, wilderness is also one of the many ways in which key elements of New Zealand culture and identity are produced and reproduced (these include characteristics such as freedom, independence, egalitarianism, adventure, self sufficiency, an affinity with nature and the ability to withstand hardship). Based on these findings, it is argued that protected area managers require a deeper understanding of the ideas and philosophies behind wilderness in order to maximise the personal, social and environmental benefits wilderness can provide for society. The main challenge for New Zealand managers will be to continue to protect and maintain the country’s unique wilderness heritage in the face of rapid and enduring social changes.

Key words: cultural identity, Fiordland, national park, New Zealand, protected natural area, qualitative research, social values, threats, tourism, visitor impacts, wilderness.
Preface

During the course of this research, I prepared papers and presentations for a variety of audiences. These outputs are listed below.

RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS


CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS


**SEMINARS, OTHER PRESENTATIONS AND UNPUBLISHED REPORTS**


Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible if it were not for the help and support of a number of people. Mum and Dad, Grandad, Granny and Papa, Si, Sharon and Nicki, and my wonderful partner John, thank you for all your support and encouragement throughout my postgraduate studies on the other side of the world.

I also wish to thank a number of staff from Lincoln University, the Department of Conservation and Chamonix ‘Ecole De Ski et Alpinisme’ for their help. Stephen, thanks for your guidance, wonderful supervision, creative ideas, and for always making time to see me no matter how busy you were. I have really appreciated your support in encouraging me to attend conferences and to publish in a number of different areas, and for trusting me to continue working on my thesis whilst living in Chamonix! Harvey, thanks for agreeing to take me on as a PhD student, despite the differences in our working styles. Your advice and input into my drafts and publications has been great. Thanks also for the coffee breaks, jokes and Monty Python impressions! Kay, thanks for being an excellent supervisor, lecturer, colleague and mentor. Your help and advice has been invaluable throughout my time studying and working at Lincoln and I have learnt so much from working with you. Jim, thanks for being a great boss during my time as a Graduate Assistant, and for encouraging me to upgrade to PhD. Bronek, thank you for being a fantastic manager at the Department of Conservation, and for convincing me it was a good idea to continue my studies. Thanks also for all your wonderful advice in terms of my professional and academic career. Mike, thanks for your input and help with the start of this project, and for always being such a reliable source of information within the Department. To the staff in Te Anau visitor centre, and the Invercargill the Department of Conservation office, thanks for being so enthusiastic about this research; for your logistical support, and for encouraging so many people to take part in it! And to the lovely ladies at the Chamonix ‘Ecole de Ski’ – thank you for letting me use your library facilities while I was living over there. Thanks for my lovely wee office and numerous cups of ‘thé Anglais’!

Other staff at Lincoln University who deserve a big thanks are: Shona, Pat, Michelle, Alyson and Evert - you know you hold this place together! Thanks for all your help, support, smiley faces and coffee breaks. Douglas, thanks for answering my many administrative queries and seemingly never-ending requests for money! And thanks to all the staff at Teaching and Learning Services and in the university library. Your post graduate courses and information
sessions were a huge help, and have taught me a number of skills which I will take away with me into my professional career.

I would also like to thank the organisations that financially supported and assisted my research through various scholarship programmes. Your contributions certainly made my student life much less stressful and enabled me to focus on my research, rather than where my next meal was coming from! So thanks to the following organisations:

- The Wild Foundation (9\textsuperscript{th} International Wilderness Congress Scholarship 2009)
- Lincoln University (Doctoral Research Scholarship 2006-2009)
- The Ministry of Tourism (Research Scholarship 2006)
- The Freemasons of New Zealand (Postgraduate Scholarship 2006)
- Lincoln University (Postgraduate Scholarship 2005)

Finally, three years of living and working as a full-time doctoral student would not have been nearly so enjoyable if it were not for my friends – both at Lincoln and outside the sphere of university life. Thanks a million to Victoria for putting up with me as an office mate for so many years; for making me laugh a lot, and for the fantastic advice and support throughout my time at Lincoln. Thanks also to Jettie, Daisy, Toni, Ani, Rieke, Jude, Heather, Andrew, Jean and Lisa for your wisdom and laughs over long lunches, cups of coffee, yoga classes and knitting lessons in the tin shed! Thanks to my other wonderful play mates who have kept me sane in Christchurch over the past three years by escaping with me for many adventures in the mountains and beyond. Thanks Jana, Rich, Anna, Shano, Alex, Pedro, Rusty, Calvo, Alana, Heath, Matt, Sam, Jo and all my other crazy outdoor friends and colleagues. And thanks to all my friends on the other side of the world who have ensured that every trip I’ve made back since moving to New Zealand has been one to remember!

Finally, none of this research would have been possible without the insight and co-operation of the actual visitors to the Fiordland wilderness. Thanks to all the participants, who completed diaries and to everyone who gave up their free time to be interviewed by me. Your views are what made this project. Thank you also to the staff in the various retail outlets and recreation organisations who helped to publicise the research back in 2005.
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Chapter 1
Wilderness in New Zealand

1.1 Introduction

When I first moved to New Zealand in 2003 I was desperate to ‘get out there’ and experience ‘the wilderness’. I had seen pictures of New Zealand’s wilderness; I had read books about New Zealand’s wilderness. I had been told stories about fantastic national parks where you could walk for hours and not see a soul; where you could camp wherever you wanted, and where you felt like you were on the edge of some ancient land that time forgot. And so that’s what I did – I got my pack and set off into ‘the wilderness’- or at least what I thought was the wilderness. Now, after having lived in New Zealand for six and a half years, and having worked for the Department of Conservation in some of New Zealand’s truly remote areas, I realise that my jaunts on the Routeburn Track, the Kepler Track and the Queen Charlotte Track¹ in my first few months of living here were not really wilderness at all. Well, not by New Zealand standards anyway. According to New Zealand wilderness policy and legislation, I discovered, wilderness in New Zealand is something quite different. It is somewhere where you are unlikely to see anyone (or any evidence of humans for that matter) for days, or even weeks, on end. Having grown up in England, where ‘wilderness’ in the New Zealand sense no longer exists, this was an entirely foreign concept, and it fascinated me.

What interested me the most was the fact that people actually enjoyed going to these places they called wilderness; places where they might spend two weeks or more trudging through mud, rain, sleet, swamps, dense vegetation and boulder fields; sleeping in wet sleeping bags; carrying packs that weighed more than me; eating tasteless dried food; getting lost or flooded out of camp in the middle of the night, and not having a shower, a proper hot meal or a cold beer for the whole trip. This was the ‘real’ New Zealand wilderness, and it was only suitable for the truly experienced. It was a place where people could ‘escape’ from every day life; where they could explore the wild New Zealand landscape, develop outdoor skills and abilities, and live in a way similar to that of the first European settlers to New Zealand several hundred years ago.

My interest in the New Zealand wilderness grew as I spent more time exploring the many wild places this country has to offer – both in my professional and private life. Hence when it

¹ Three of the more popular multi-day walking tracks in New Zealand.
came to selecting a topic of study for my PhD, wilderness was the obvious choice. Three years later, this thesis represents what I discovered.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to introducing the research topic. It explains the study context and describes the research problem. It then reviews the key objectives and summarises the theoretical and methodological approaches used. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis structure.

### 1.2 Research context

The context for the current study can be explained in terms of global and national trends in wilderness use and management.

#### 1.2.1 Global context

As the earth’s remaining wild places come under increasing threat from humans and the pressures of development, legally defined wilderness areas are gaining popularity and significance (WILD Foundation 2009). The European Commission recently highlighted the value of wilderness by adopting a landmark resolution on wilderness in Europe, with the aim of protecting Europe’s remaining wild lands (Europarc 2009). The number of countries implementing wilderness legislation and policies or zoning mechanisms is increasing each year, and many private land owners have now adopted wilderness protection policies (WILD Foundation 2009). At the same time, however, the number of people choosing to visit wilderness and other protected natural areas has also increased (Buckley 2006; Cessford & Dingwall 1997; Gonzalez & Otero 2002; Kirkpatrick 2001; Poon 1993; Urry 2002). This has been largely due to a variety of social, political, economic and technological changes which have affected the way wilderness is conceptualised and used. Such changes have included population growth, increased leisure time, improvements in technology and transport, a growing interest in (and desire to visit places associated with) the natural environment, the provision of additional services and facilities on conservation land, and a rapid rise in the number of nature-hungry tourists, seeking to experience the world’s remaining wilderness areas before they disappear.

Hundreds of thousands of people every day visit wilderness areas throughout the world, hoping to experience values such as peace, solitude, remoteness and close contact with nature. Ironically, however, the more people who visit these areas, the less likely it is that they will have the experiences they seek (Cole 2000). In order to fully understand the background to
the current study, it is also useful to examine the development of wilderness in a New Zealand context. (This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two).

1.2.2 National context
Over one third of New Zealand’s land mass is protected in parks and reserves, and there are currently six officially designated wilderness areas within this. Tongariro National Park was the first national park to be established in New Zealand in 1887, when Heuheu Tukino IV, the chief of Ngati Tuwharetoa, gifted the sacred peaks to the nation (DOC 2007b). Since then, a further 13 parks have been created, all with the purpose of preserving areas of land ‘for their intrinsic worth and for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the public’ because ‘their preservation is in the national interest’ (National Parks Act 1980). Wilderness areas are a particular classification of public conservation land, which is afforded significantly high protection from human use and development. Specific legislation which defined wilderness areas and recognised the value of wilderness was developed in New Zealand in the 1952 National Parks Act. This concept of wilderness was based on the philosophies and ideas embodied in the United States wilderness movement. From the mid 1950s, however, several key individuals and recreation organisations lobbied the New Zealand Government for a change in the legal definition of wilderness to better reflect New Zealand’s unique social, political, geographical and ecological situation. The definition has thus been refined and modified, leading to the creation of a New Zealand-specific concept which will be described in Chapter Two.

New Zealand wilderness has become iconic on both a national and international scale. Many New Zealanders feel a strong sense of pride towards their country’s outstanding natural landscape and its wilderness resource, whether they actually visit it or not (Bell 1996). International tourists also now come to New Zealand in their millions to view these iconic protected natural areas, and to experience the country’s vast untouched wilderness for themselves (Booth & Simmons 2000). Tourism New Zealand’s ‘100% Pure’ marketing campaign (which uses images of New Zealand’s wilderness landscape to portray the country as clean, green and spectacularly beautiful) has been extremely successful in raising the profile of New Zealand as an international tourist destination, and the number of international visitors to the country doubled between 1993 and 2006 (Tourism New Zealand 2008). This has had significant economic and social benefits for New Zealand, but has also presented some challenges for conservation managers. The research problem on which the current study is based derives primarily from these challenges, and is described in the following section.
1.3 New Zealand wilderness: the research problem and research objectives

New Zealand wilderness is of great importance to the nation for a variety of social, cultural, political, ecological and economic reasons. The wilderness landscape is recognised (nationally and internationally) as one of the defining characteristics of New Zealand (Bell 1996; Bell & Lyall 2002; N. Clark 2004). Wilderness also provides a setting in which New Zealanders can practise a variety of ‘traditional’ outdoor recreation activities such as tramping\(^2\), hunting, fishing and kayaking. Furthermore, wilderness has significant ecological value because of the number of endemic species for which it provides a habitat (Shultis 1997), and makes considerable contributions to the country’s economy because of the way it is used to promote New Zealand as an international tourist destination.

Whilst the growing tourist use of public conservation land has numerous social and economic benefits for New Zealand (see, for example, DOC 2004a, 2005e and 2006b), anecdotal evidence suggests that this influx of ‘new’ visitors is causing tensions in some (especially the more remote) areas, between ‘foreigners’ and local New Zealanders who feel a strong sense of ownership towards these places. On an international scale, there has been a significant amount of research into the effects of increasing use of wilderness environments (see, for example, Borrie & Freimund 1998; Crothers 1987; Gabites 1996; Watson 2000). It is surprising then, that no studies have specifically been undertaken in New Zealand wilderness. Little is known about the people who visit New Zealand wilderness, the values they hold for these places, and the potential effects of external influences (such as increasing international tourism) on wilderness. There does appear to be a growing awareness of the social and cultural value of New Zealand’s conservation land. In 1983, for example, the General Policy for National Parks emphasised the importance of providing visitors with the opportunity to ‘gain an understanding and appreciation’ of national parks and their ‘natural, historic and cultural significance’ (Department of Lands and Survey 1983), and a number of studies in the past few decades have examined the Māori cultural values for natural New Zealand landscapes and protected natural areas (see, for example, Harmsworth 1997, 2001; McGregor & McMath 1993; Matunga 1995). While this is useful information, as yet, there has been no research which has focused specifically on New Zealand wilderness values.

\(^2\) ‘Tramping’ is a New Zealand term, used to describe the activity of extended walks or ‘hikes’ (generally with a back pack and on conservation land). The term also has cultural connotations, involving connections with the landscape which will be discussed later in this thesis. Tramping is known elsewhere as ‘hiking’, ‘trekking’, ‘walking’, or ‘rambling’.
Fiordland National Park is considered New Zealand’s largest remaining expanse of ‘wilderness’, and provides significant opportunities for wilderness recreation (DOC 1996). The Park is also one of the country’s most popular international tourist destinations (Ministry of Tourism 2009c). This presents managers with the challenge of protecting traditional wilderness values and recreation opportunities, whilst also maximising the benefits associated with increased tourism to the region (and providing quality experiences for international tourists).

Fiordland National Park was chosen as the case study site for this research largely for practical and logistical reasons (it simply would not have been feasible to develop a fieldwork programme which incorporated the entire New Zealand wilderness resource, so a case study approach was deemed appropriate) but also because of a managerial requirement for information about wilderness use of the Park. The Department of Conservation had identified a research need which required data to be gathered from users of remote and wilderness areas of the Park\(^3\). This facilitated logistics for the diary distribution and also helped to address a management issue. It is important to note here that, although the early stages of the project were designed to address particular management needs, the Department relinquished all involvement in the research once it became a PhD. This enabled the enquiry to develop without the constraints of external influences, and meant that any initial concerns I had about the independence of the research were addressed. Despite this, tensions occasionally arose in my mind between the applied and academic nature of the study, and it was important that I constantly scrutinised my position as an academic (and a previous DOC employee) during the course of the research. This issue is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six (‘Methods’), and more detail about Fiordland National Park (including physical characteristics, natural and historic history, visitor and tourism trends and management issues) is presented in Chapter Five (‘Study Setting’).

The aims and objectives for the current study were developed from the research ‘problem’ outlined above.

### 1.3.1 Research objectives

The objectives of this thesis were:

- To explore the meanings and values of New Zealand wilderness through the eyes of wilderness users.

\(^3\) Information about the Department’s involvement in this research, and the management issues which initially drove it will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six.
• To identify factors which may threaten traditional New Zealand wilderness meanings, and to explore how wilderness users interpret these influences.

The theoretical and methodological approaches developed to address these research objectives are described in the following two sections.

1.4 Theoretical considerations

This research adopts a socio-cultural approach to wilderness. I decided that this approach was best suited to my research objectives because of their exploratory nature. This decision also had a major influence on my choice of methods. (These are introduced in section 1.6, and are discussed in detail in Chapter Six).

Given my background in human geography, I was already familiar with studies that used a diversity of theoretical approaches, with concepts ‘borrowed’ from a range of different disciplines. Partly because of this, and because wilderness has been studied from such a wide range of disciplines and theoretical perspectives, the theoretical approach chosen for this particular study was deliberately open from the start. I liked the idea of ‘letting the data speak for itself’ as in the Grounded Theory Approach (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Consequently, the research went in a number of different directions in the early stages as I explored a number of potentially useful theories and ideas. It became increasingly clear that, despite the wide variety of approaches that have been taken to studying wilderness, most studies fell into one of two major groups – those which adopted a cognitive behavioural approach4, and those which adopted a socio-cultural approach5. I begin my theoretical literature review in Chapter Four with a discussion of some of the early ideas and approaches employed by behavioural psychologists and cognitive psychologists to understand wilderness. Such studies (although less popular nowadays) laid the ground work for wilderness research as it is today. Over the past few decades, socio-cultural approaches to wilderness have become more common. These approaches reflect the complexity of the wilderness phenomenon, and are the result of major theoretical and methodological shifts in the broader field of social science. They draw on the disciplines of sociology, social geography and anthropology, and use predominantly qualitative research methods to explore the multiple meanings people ascribe to phenomena (rather than attempting to measure quantifiable attributes or visitor satisfaction). A review of

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4 This approach characterised most of the early wilderness work, and relied upon traditional survey methods to gather information on use levels and user characteristics.

5 This approach has become more common over the past few decades, reflecting a significant shift in the theoretical and methodological approaches to wilderness research.
some of the more recent socio-cultural wilderness studies forms the second part of Chapter Four.

1.5 Methodological considerations

Because recreation researchers have a variety of social research tools available, care must be taken to ensure that the chosen study procedures are consistent with the subject matter to be studied.

(Clark 1984, p. 23)

Deciding on an appropriate research methodology is based on a variety of considerations, including the major research questions, the time and resources available and the type of knowledge desired. The decision is also strongly influenced by the theoretical ideas being used. A qualitative approach was chosen for this study for two main reasons. First, because my methods needed to reflect the theoretical approach (which was socio-cultural), and thus tended strongly towards the use of qualitative techniques. Second, because the nature of the research objectives demanded a sensitive method which would enable an in depth exploration of wilderness meanings. (I did not feel that this would be possible through a traditional survey approach). The methodological approach also reflects developments in the broader field of social science. Just as the theoretical approach to wilderness has changed over time, so has the type of methods used. There has been a gradual shift away from survey-based, descriptive studies, towards more qualitative, in depth approaches such as interviews, participant observation and focus groups.

One of the most challenging issues with wilderness research is the fact that collecting primary data can be extremely difficult – particularly in a country like New Zealand where visitor numbers to wilderness are relatively low, and where access is very difficult. Research diaries and in depth interviews were eventually selected as the most appropriate way of exploring the wilderness phenomenon in a qualitative manner without over-burdening the research participants. Respondents were given diaries before their wilderness visit and asked to complete them during every day of their trip. A selection of diarists were then interviewed after their trip. Details about how these particular methods were chosen and adopted for use in this study are provided in Chapter Six.

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6 It is largely for this reason that there was such a dearth of existing information on wilderness use and impacts prior to this research taking place.
1.6 Terminology and definitions

Certain terms are used frequently throughout this thesis and require definition. The concept of wilderness is the focus of section 1.6.1, and other terms are described in section 1.6.2.

1.6.1 Defining wilderness

The definition of wilderness has been the subject of numerous academic studies. According to Nash (1982), wilderness is a ‘state of mind’, influenced by personal and cultural values. It can be found in many different environments by different people. Some may experience wilderness in their local park or their back garden; while others require a large-scale, remote, natural area where the influence of humans is substantially unnoticeable. Precise definitions of wilderness, and the philosophies underpinning wilderness management, vary internationally and between individuals. Many visitors to New Zealand may view roadside picnic areas as wilderness, whereas New Zealand wilderness ‘purists’ would likely ridicule such suggestions. Despite this, the literature suggests that most people recognise wilderness as something to be valued and preserved; a place that embodies naturalness, and where one can obtain mental and physical benefits through an appreciation of the natural environment (Pigram & Jenkins 2006). Wilderness is regarded as a place where plants and animals are undisturbed, and where visitors are able to enjoy primitive and unconfined recreation activities which require a high level of self-sufficiency and the minimum of mechanical aids (Barr 2001; Cessford & Dingwall 1997; DOC 2006a; Ewert & McAvoy 2000; Pigram & Jenkins 2006). Recreation planners and conservation managers throughout the world have come to recognise the numerous benefits of wilderness, and strive to provide a range of ‘wilderness’ environments for visitors to appreciate and enjoy. These range from short roadside walks and picnic sites, to multi-day walks in remote, harsh and challenging environments.

As will be discussed in Chapter Two, the legal definition of wilderness in New Zealand is much more exclusive than in other countries such as the United States or countries in Europe. In contrast to the IUCN\(^7\) classification of wilderness which states that wilderness areas ‘should generally be free of modern infrastructure, development and industrial extractive activity’ [emphasis added] (IUCN 2008, p. 14), developments such as tracks, huts, bridges and signs and motorised access are strictly forbidden in New Zealand wilderness\(^8\). Many of

\(^7\) IUCN (the International Union for Conservation of Nature) is the world’s oldest and largest global environmental network. It produces a comprehensive range of conservation publications, including guidelines for protected area management and wilderness designation.

\(^8\) For cultural and historic reasons, aircraft access is allowed in at particular sites in some Wilderness Areas in New Zealand during the popular hunting season.
the remote areas of the country’s conservation land are managed as wilderness, but cannot be legally designated as ‘Wilderness’ because they ‘do not meet all of the [wilderness] criteria’ contained in the Wilderness Policy (New Zealand Wilderness Policy 1985). No definition of wilderness is provided in the current study, because the overall aim is to explore what this concept means in a New Zealand context. To provide a definition would have undermined this major research goal. The definition of concepts related to wilderness which are used in this study (e.g. wilderness area, wilderness experience, wilderness resource) are presented in the following section.

1.6.2 Other terms and concepts used in this study

A variety of terms are used frequently in the literature to describe both the wilderness resource (e.g. Wilderness Area, Remote Area, protected natural area) and the people who visit it (e.g. wilderness users, visitors, wilderness recreationists, wilderness tourists and commercial tourists). Attempts to distinguish between these various terms (in particular, ‘recreation’ and ‘tourism’, or ‘recreationist’ and ‘tourist’) have been the subject of considerable academic attention, and have been discussed frequently in the public press (see, for example, Hall & Page 1999; Pigram 1985; Round 2006; Simmons & Leiper 1993; Smith & Godbey 1991; Spearpoint 2007). For this reason, it is important to clarify their use in the current study.

The terms ‘protected natural area’ and ‘(public) conservation land’ are used interchangeably to refer to an area that has been formally set aside and protected for its conservation values such as a national park or a reserve.

The term ‘national park’ refers to protected natural areas that are designated as such by the country’s respective government. Each country has slightly different guidelines for the designation of a national park (although the IUCN does provide guidelines. See IUCN 1994). In New Zealand, national parks are ‘areas of New Zealand that contain scenery of such distinctive quality, ecological systems or natural features so beautiful, unique, or scientifically important that their preservation is in the national interest’ (National Parks Act 1980). They are to be ‘preserved in perpetuity for their intrinsic worth and for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the public’ (ibid.)

‘Remote Area’ is used to describe areas that are defined as ‘Remote’ in the Draft Fiordland National Park Management plan (DOC 2006a). These areas are managed to ‘protect values
such as remoteness and natural quiet and the relatively unmodified natural environment’ (ibid. p. 153). Remote areas are often managed as wilderness in New Zealand.

‘Wilderness Area’ refers to an area that has been legally designated as wilderness by the government of the country in which it is located. Legal definitions of wilderness vary significantly from country to country. The criteria for wilderness designation in New Zealand is described in Chapter Two.

Because of the restrictive definition of legal wilderness in New Zealand ‘wilderness setting’ and ‘wilderness resource’ are used to describe wilderness areas and adjacent lands offering qualities of a wilderness experience (as defined in the New Zealand Wilderness Policy 1985). This includes areas which are designated as ‘Wilderness’ or ‘Remote’ in the Draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan (DOC 2006a).

‘Wilderness experience’ is a generic term used to describe what wilderness users do, what they see, what they hear, what they smell, and how they feel during the time that they are using the wilderness resource.

The terms ‘wilderness visitor’, ‘wilderness recreationist’, ‘wilderness user’ and ‘independent recreationist’ are used interchangeably to describe the participants in this study, and other individuals who visit wilderness independently (i.e. without using a commercial service or facility during\(^9\) their wilderness trip). It is important to note that users of conservation land vary significantly in terms of their age, nationality, motives, expectations, level of experience and types of activity undertaken. The different visitor types can be represented along a continuum, based on the type of recreation opportunity they are seeking. The categories used for visitor management in New Zealand outdoor recreation settings are discussed in Chapter Two. The focus of the present research is wilderness users, who are typically classified at the wilderness-end of the spectrum, meaning that they are likely to be very experienced, and seeking a recreation experience in a remote and challenging setting with few other people.

In contrast to the previous definition, the terms ‘tourist’ ‘wilderness tourist’ and ‘commercial tourist’ are used interchangeably to describe individuals who use and pay for facilities and services provided by the private sector during their wilderness visit. This

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\(^9\) Many of the participants in this study used commercial transport operators to access the start or finish of their wilderness trips, but no-one used commercial services or facilities during their trip.
interpretation is based on the definition of ‘tourism’ in the Department of Conservation Visitor Strategy (DOC 1996) which is discussed in Chapter Two.

The terms ‘tourism’, ‘commercial tourism’, ‘wilderness tourism’ and ‘commercial recreation’ are also used interchangeably to describe the process which occurs when visitors (tourists) use and pay for facilities and services provided by the private sector during their visit to conservation land.

‘Kiwi’ is a colloquial term used to describe people from New Zealand.

1.7 Chapter summary and thesis outline

This chapter has introduced the topic of wilderness and has set the context for the present study. It has explained the ‘research problem’ and related study objectives and has described the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted. Wilderness in Western society is gaining popularity and significance and the number of people visiting wilderness has increased. This is placing growing pressure on the social and biophysical capacity of wilderness areas, and presenting challenges for wilderness managers.

Fiordland National Park in New Zealand is a prime example of wilderness which is experiencing increasing (international) visitor use. Despite this, little is known about the people who use the Fiordland wilderness (or any areas of New Zealand wilderness), or about factors which may be affecting their recreation experiences. The present study aims to address this research gap by directly contacting Fiordland wilderness users and exploring their views on wilderness and related issues. As such, this research provides important managerial information on wilderness use and users, whilst also expanding the current knowledge of wilderness values and the effects of external influences (such as increasing tourism) on these values. In addition, this study provides a useful basis for further socio-cultural wilderness research in New Zealand, and presents New Zealand-specific findings which can be compared with similar studies in other Western countries.

The final section in this chapter describes how the remainder of the thesis is structured.

Chapter Two is a background chapter. It introduces the concept of wilderness, and describes the history and development of the wilderness movement in New Zealand. The second part of the chapter outlines the legal and policy framework for wilderness management in New Zealand.
Chapter Three provides a broad overview of the development of tourism (and wilderness tourism) in New Zealand, and the influence that this has had on the use and values of wilderness. It also introduces some of the issues associated with tourism on conservation land and in wilderness, and introduces various theoretical ideas that have been used to understand these issues.

In Chapter Four, existing research on the recreational use of wilderness is reviewed, and a number of theoretical concepts for understanding wilderness are introduced. The chapter is divided into two main sections which reflect the dominant approaches to wilderness research over the past forty years. Part one presents findings from the early behavioural/psychological wilderness studies, and part two introduces the more recent socio-cultural wilderness research.

Chapter five introduces Fiordland National Park – the case study site for this research. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first describes the history and physical characteristics of Fiordland National Park and outlines recent visitor and tourism trends. The second discusses the current management of the Park, and the third section presents information on tourism activities in remote and wilderness areas of the Park.

Chapter Six describes the research methods and approach used in this study, with an explanation of why they were chosen and how they were adopted. This includes research diaries, interviews and secondary data sources. The limitations of the method and the ethical issues are also considered, and some of the methodological challenges faced by contemporary wilderness researchers are discussed.

Chapters’ Seven to Ten present the ‘heart’ of this thesis – the key study findings. These four chapters examine the individual components of the wilderness phenomenon, and ‘unpack’ these in relation to the overall experience. To begin, Chapter Seven presents an overview of some of the more quantifiable dimensions of New Zealand wilderness. The experience is described in terms of who the wilderness users are (age, nationality etc.) ‘why’ they chose to undertake such a trip, ‘how many people’ they travelled with, ‘what they expected’ from their experience, the ‘main activities’ undertaken and ‘how long’ their trips lasted. These findings are described for everyone who completed a wilderness diary.

Chapter Eight examines the meanings and values that study participants attribute to wilderness. This includes key experiential dimensions, values and benefits associated with the experience; and features of the physical, social and environmental setting that are required to
facilitate these dimensions. Many of the values identified by respondents (for example, challenge, escape and a closeness to nature) reflect existing wilderness literature, policy and legislation. Several new dimensions are also identified.

Chapter Nine explores potential threats to the core wilderness values discussed in Chapter Eight. A number of external influences are identified as threats to existing wilderness meanings, including increasing visitor use of wilderness, increasing tourism and improved technology.

Chapter Ten explores the idea of wilderness as a manifestation of New Zealand identity and culture, including a discussion of place attachment and the desire to protect wilderness for future generations. The chapter is divided into two main sections. Section one considers the importance of wilderness to New Zealand culture. Section two suggests two important implications of the close relationship between wilderness and national identity: place attachment and a strong desire to leave wilderness as a legacy for future generations of New Zealanders.

In Chapter Eleven, the study findings outlined in Chapters Seven to Ten are discussed in relation to existing research. A conceptual model is presented to help illustrate the relationships between the different aspects of the study, and to highlight the importance of the social dimensions of wilderness. It is proposed that wilderness in New Zealand is a cultural phenomenon; and the causes and implications of this are considered. Avenues for future research in this area are suggested, and the thesis concludes with some thoughts about the future of wilderness in New Zealand and broader Western society.
Chapter 2

History and development of the wilderness concept

2.1 Introduction

I don’t think that people have a very good understanding of the term 'wilderness', because I can think of it in a planning sense, or a legislative sense - for example wilderness means there will be no aircraft access, there will be no structures etcetera. But for 99 per cent of the people that we deal with, wilderness is the Milford road. Because they’ve never been anywhere that is just so naturally beautiful, and has such a minimum of infrastructure and human development... I think that perhaps people on the management side of things get hung up on what wilderness means to them, whereas the rest of us might think that wilderness means a patch of grass or a bit of natural native forest!

(TO7)

The above quotation illustrates some of the complexities involved in defining wilderness. Wilderness can be interpreted in various ways. It can be defined as a subjective construct that varies from person to person, or it can be defined in a legal sense (as stated in government policy or legislation). In the legal sense, wilderness is a phenomenon of the 20th century, originating in the United States of America and progressively becoming established throughout the global protected area system (Shultis 1999). Legislative definitions of wilderness vary considerably between countries, reflecting differing philosophies of wilderness and approaches to wilderness management (ibid.). New Zealand was one of the first countries to legislate for wilderness, by including a specific provision in section 34 the 1952 National Parks Act which permitted the setting apart ‘of any area of a [National] Park as a wilderness area… [which] shall be kept and maintained in a state of nature’. Wilderness areas are now a well-established component of the New Zealand protected areas network under a range of policy and legislation, and there are many other areas of the country’s conservation land that are not legally gazetted as ‘Wilderness’, but are managed as such.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the concept of wilderness and the development of the wilderness movement in New Zealand. It describes the legal and policy framework for wilderness management in New Zealand11, including a discussion about the legislative definitions of ‘Wilderness’ and ‘Remote Area’ as represented in the various acts, policies and plans. The final section of this chapter introduces the broad framework for managing tourism

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10 This is a quotation from an interview with a study respondent. The way in which respondents are cited in this thesis is explained in Chapter Six.

11 ‘Wilderness management’ refers to the management of the New Zealand ‘wilderness resource’ (as defined in Chapter One). This includes legally designated wilderness areas and adjacent lands offering qualities of a wilderness experience.
activities on conservation land in New Zealand, including remote and wilderness areas. Specific provisions for the management of tourism activities within Fiordland National Park will be presented in Chapter Five.

2.2 The meaning of wilderness

Although the concept of wilderness has been around since biblical times, its meaning has changed over time, and varies considerably between countries and individuals (Eagles, McCool & Haynes 2002). The actual word ‘wilderness’ derives from the German phrase ‘will doer ness’, which means a place of self-willed animals. ‘Will’ means self-willed (e.g. not subject to human domination); ‘doer’ means wild animal and ‘ness’ means place (ibid.). Therefore wilderness is seen as a place where nature exists on its own terms, where human interference is minimal or non-existent, and where humans must abide by the values and rhythms of nature. The word is commonly used (and well understood) in English and Germanic languages such as German, Dutch and Scandinavian (ibid.).

Many of the basic elements of the concept of wilderness derive from the bible, where Jesus faces personal challenges and tribulations alone in the desert wilderness. He suffers mental and physical hardships, but overcomes these through personal strength. This experience prepares Jesus for the personal challenges to come. It also refreshes and rejuvenates him as he spends time alone, away from people and society, and has time to reflect and contemplate. Seen in this way, wilderness is a place of redemption, contemplation and reflection; a place to be alone or with small group, where nature dominates; a place to get away from ‘normal’ life; a place which provides a contrast to everyday life; a place of reflection and thought; a place of challenge and danger where people must overcome difficulties through personal skills, strength and determination; a place that pushes people to their limits, and in doing so, prepares them for challenges in every day life.

This theme has been adapted in the Western world to wilderness recreation, where wilderness is typically seen as a place where individuals can travel alone or in small groups, to places where they will be at the mercy of nature, and where they can challenge themselves mentally and physically, whilst also escaping from everyday life and rejuvenating the mind and soul. This contemporary view of wilderness represents the romantic view of nature which arose during the late 18th century (described later in this section). These ideas are reflected in the wilderness legislation of most Western countries today. For example, in the United States (the first country to place the wilderness concept into legislation, and commonly understood to be
the founder of the recreational wilderness movement), the Wilderness Act (1964) states that wilderness is: ‘an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain... [an area of] land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which ... has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation’. Most Western countries (including New Zealand) have modelled their wilderness policy and legislation on the US philosophy.\textsuperscript{12}

In the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century, wilderness is believed to contribute to the ecological, economic and social health and well being of individuals and Western societies (Aykroyd 2009; Eagles \textit{et al.} 2002; Hine, Pretty & Barton 2009; Roberts 2009). In addition to the numerous recreational opportunities available in wilderness, it is also believed to have many other important values such as ecological, scientific, educational, scenic and historical value (see Jensen 1995; Driver, Nash & Haas 1987; Reed & Brown 2003). (Some of these values will be discussed in Chapter Four). Despite this, wilderness has not always been regarded as a thing of great value to society, and interpretations of wilderness have shifted significantly over time. Bell & Lyall (2002, p. 6) note that: ‘the origins of the concept are complex. Its roots are found in a discourse that reaches to the present from classical and biblical traditions’. During the middle ages, wilderness was thought to be something frightening and alien to humans. It was seen as a dangerous place that people should avoid at all costs (Nash 1969). Wilderness was described as barren, ugly, monstrous and terrifying. It was believed to be a chaotic, disordered, dangerous and useless area of wasteland in which it would be impossible for mankind to make a home. Cultivated land, on the other hand, represented beauty, order and safety (see Bell & Lyall 2002; Lochhead 1994; Roche 1984; Soper 1995).

During the romantic movement of the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, however, Western views of wilderness changed significantly.\textsuperscript{13} Wilderness came to be seen as a place of beauty and power; a place to be respected and celebrated because of the ‘natural’ order and absence of human influence. The whole concept of wilderness shifted from being an object of condemnation and repulsion to a place of splendour and celebration. People began to look at wilderness areas in awe, and to seek out wilderness as a place for spiritual renewal, aesthetic appreciation and contemplation (Bell & Lyall 2002; Philipsen 1995). Wilderness areas and

\textsuperscript{12} The precise wording and details of the New Zealand legislative concept of wilderness will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

\textsuperscript{13} Byron, Wordsworth, Leopold and Muir were all major proponents of the romantic vision of nature.
their ‘unspoiled’ nature and lack of human influence even became regarded as ‘sacred’ places where one could be close to God, and free from the evils of modern society (Cronon 1995; Lochhead 1994; Meeker 1984). This process involved a profound change in Western environmental consciousness and the human/nature relationship, which led to an increasing desire to protect wilderness (Oeschlager 1991).

These shifts in the perception of wilderness have led a number of commentators to conclude that wilderness is a social construction - a product of the culture that has created it (see, for example Bell & Lyall 2002; Cronon 1995; Eagles et al. 2002; Grant 1998; Higham et al. 2000; McCorvie & Welch 1996; Meeker 1984; Schrepfer 2005; Stankey 1973; Williams 2002a). The purpose and function of wilderness is believed to reflect the needs and values of the society of which it is a part. Gill (1999, p. 54) found that ‘[the wilderness discourse] is about order and chaos, identity and otherness; it is as much a social construct as a natural event, and inherently about nation and empire’. And Meeker (1984, p. 131) concluded:

America’s national parks are expressive of myth that has been present in Western culture for some 4,000 years. They are national Gardens of Eden where we can feel close to the origins of human life, and to the peace, innocence and moral purity that myth ascribes to the origins of mankind.

This topic of debate became prominent in the academic arena after an article by Cronon (1995), in which he proposed that wilderness is a product of civilisation - a ‘profoundly human creation… the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history’ (p.7). Daniel Williams has advanced this discussion significantly in recent years, arguing that the meaning of wilderness is socially produced, and that it is ‘anchored in history and culture, and not some enduring, objective or visible properties’ (Williams 2002a p. 123). Others have drawn attention to the gendered and racialised nature of wilderness, and highlighted the way in which it has been constructed as a white, European male phenomenon (see Martin 2004; Meeker 1984; Roenke & Lacy 1998; Schrepfer 2005). Such studies have raised awareness of the multiple constructions of wilderness, and challenged researchers to reconsider some of the assumptions underlying their research. As remarked by Williams (2002a), this kind of research indicates that the meaning of wilderness is ‘continuously created and recreated through social interactions and practices’ (p. 123). Findings from these studies will be discussed in Chapter Four.
2.3 A history of wilderness in New Zealand

While the development of the protected area network\(^\text{14}\) in New Zealand has remained consistent with that of most Western nations, the concept of wilderness has evolved in a unique way, through a combination of social and ecological factors (Molloy 1983). This has resulted in a distinctive, ‘indigenous’ wilderness philosophy and legislative framework which is much more stringent than its counterparts in other countries (Shultis 1997). This section outlines the development of wilderness in New Zealand.

New Zealand’s land mass has been geographically separate from the rest of the world for around 80 million years (Shultis 1997). This isolation resulted in the development of a distinct bio-geographical landscape with an extremely high number of endemic species and no mammalian predators. Since the arrival of the first humans (around 1000 years ago), however, the natural environment has been modified at a rate rarely exceeded anywhere else in the world. The early Polynesian settlers had a significant impact on the natural landscape, but even bigger changes were set in motion in the mid 1800s when organised British settlement began. The early European colonisers did not believe that protecting areas of wild land was compatible with their settlement goals (i.e. the nation could not afford the luxury of protecting potentially productive wild land) (Lochhead 1994). They had a very utilitarian approach to land management, in which wilderness was seen as a useless wasteland to be tamed or domesticated (ibid.). As noted by Dann (2002, p. 277), colonisation involved a ‘replacement of old and feeble indigenous species with new and vigorous stock’. Following early European colonisation, a lengthy period ensued of what could be termed ‘the taming of the wilderness’, which involved the mass destruction and domestication of New Zealand’s wild lands (Molloy 1983; Park 2002; Roche 2002). As a result, the forest cover has been reduced from approximately 80 per cent to around 23 per cent – primarily for the purposes of agriculture (Cessford 2001), and many indigenous species have become extinct through landscape modification and competition with introduced species (Veblen & Stewart 1982).

Fortunately, this destruction did not continue entirely unabated, and even as early as the 1870s, there were moves to protect some of New Zealand’s natural areas\(^\text{15}\). Throughout the period of colonisation and dominion over nature, there was a significant minority who resisted this way of thinking, and expressed a desire to protect and value nature for its own sake (rather than for the benefit of mankind) (Lochhead 1994). This attitude is believed to be the

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\(^{14}\) Protected area network refers to all of conservation land in New Zealand, including National Parks, Wilderness Areas, Conservation Areas and other types of parks and reserves.

\(^{15}\) The first attempt to protect wild lands through the Forests Bill 1874 was met with a storm of opposition from the general public who believed that the Government were interfering with their attempts at colonising.
legacy of the Romantic Movement at the end of the eighteenth century, and it encouraged the protection of parks and protected areas in New Zealand, as well as stimulating an increasing interest in outdoor and nature-based recreation (ibid.) – a trend which has remained strong through to the present day.

New Zealand was one of the first countries in the world to establish a national park (Tongariro National Park in 1887). After this, there followed a succession of other parks which were established primarily for recreation and tourism purposes\(^{16}\). By the end of the nineteenth century (after much of the suitable land had been transformed into productive farmland) the settlers’ utilitarian approach to nature in New Zealand had been replaced by the romantic notions of the natural environment. Exploring the remaining native landscape was also perceived as a pragmatic way to develop important skills such as survival and navigation (Devlin 1995; Shultis 1991). The peasant farmers and artisan settlers from the ‘old world’ were keen to enshrine the values of freedom and egalitarianism in legislation through the provision of public conservation lands for all to enjoy their natural and historic heritage (Molloy & Potton 2007). The natural environment thus became idealised as embodying the righteous values of ‘community, cooperation, simplicity and goodness’ (Lochhead 1994, p. 55). This provided the impetus to protect what remained of New Zealand’s wild lands. The desire to do so was strengthened further by the granting of New Zealand’s independence from England in 1947\(^ {17} \) and the quest for New Zealanders to find a new identity which distinguished New Zealand from the ‘homeland’ (Bell & Lyall 2002; N. Clark 2004; Lochhead 1994; Shultis 1997; Sinclair 1986).

Since European arrival in New Zealand, there had been an ethic of adventure and exploration, both for practical reasons (such as the search for resources) and for the recreation goals of discovering unknown areas (Barr 2001). Moreover, the bio-geographical isolation from the other continents had ensured that New Zealand contained a unique natural environment and a large number of species which were to be found nowhere else in the world. The natural environment and the pioneering ethic of exploration and living within nature was seen as the obvious choice for a ‘new’ national identity (Sinclair 1986). As noted by Bell (1996, p. 29):

> In discourses on the development of a nation’s identity, nature can substitute for or stand for the past… Turning to nature is another way of accounting for distinctiveness. New Zealand can claim itself a unique country, purely for its natural landscape and the plant and animal species endemic to New Zealand.

\(^{16}\) There were also other, less obvious, reasons for the establishment of some of the early parks, such as spiritual and cultural values, or a desire to protect agricultural land (see Booth & Simmons 2000).

\(^{17}\) England formally granted New Zealand the right to independence in 1931, but the New Zealand Parliament did not officially accept the offer until 1947.
New Zealanders hence turned to their unique natural environment and historic relationship with nature as a key source of national identity. This growing sense of pride and nationalism was reflected in the continued setting aside of wild areas that New Zealanders believed to be unique to their country: ‘The scenery preservation movement played an important role in helping to shape a sense of national identity by encouraging pride in the unique features of the New Zealand landscape, flora and fauna’ (Lochhead 1994, p. 143). In the 21st century, New Zealand’s wilderness resource now embodies the natural features which support national identity and national distinctiveness (Bell 1996; N. Clark 2004; Shultis 1997).

2.3.1 Wilderness areas

As part of the increasing desire to protect what was precious and unique about New Zealand, discussions about wilderness areas began. The idea was first raised in the 1930s, following the start of the wilderness protection movement in the United States, however the ‘crucial impetus’ for the New Zealand wilderness movement (and the ensuing development of the legislative concept of New Zealand wilderness) did not come until 1949, when the President of the United States Wilderness Society (Olaus Murie) visited New Zealand to address various branches of the New Zealand Geographical Society. During these presentations, Olaus lamented the fragmented and chaotic state of the New Zealand protected area administration, and subsequently provided direct input into the section on wilderness areas of the 1952 National Parks Act. These provisions mirrored the American conception of wilderness areas and wilderness recreation, containing wording similar to the proposed United States Wilderness Act (Shultis 1997).

Despite this development, many New Zealand wilderness supporters (largely members of the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand (FMC), but also individuals from other lobby groups and government officials) were dissatisfied with the outcome. They felt that the concept of wilderness was not adequately defined and that it relied too heavily on established wilderness management and ideals in other countries (Shultis 1997). From the 1970s onwards, the FMC lobbied for changes in the legislative concept of wilderness and for more legally designated wilderness areas. They pushed for a more ‘indigenous’ version of wilderness, which they believed should reflect the country’s unique social, political, geographical and ecological situation (Shultis 1997), and should ‘give future generations the same opportunities to pioneer’ (Barr 2001 p. 18) and to explore in wild nature.

This movement gathered more strength from the growing environmental concerns of the late 1970s and 1980s, culminating in the FMC 50th Anniversary wilderness conference in 1981,
and the subsequent Wilderness Policy 1985 (produced by the Wilderness Advisory Group which was established at the conference in 1981). This interagency policy (endorsed by the National Parks and Reserves Authority and the Forest Service) in some ways reflected the American concept of wilderness (for example, wilderness areas were now to be preserved and perpetuated in their natural state, with only minimal signs of human interference tolerated). But at the same time, the policy represented a significant alteration of the wilderness concept from other Western countries, and from the earlier New Zealand versions. New Zealand Wilderness became much more strictly defined, and geared towards the preservation of unmodified landscapes (Shultis 1997). The major difference between this version of wilderness and its North American and Australian counterparts was that wilderness areas in New Zealand would no longer be allowed to contain ‘facilities such as huts, tracks, bridges, signs, nor mechanised access’ (Wilderness Advisory Group 1985). In addition, buffer zones were to be encouraged to protect the wilderness experience in these areas, and recreational use (although welcomed) was neither to be encouraged nor publicised. There are currently many protected areas in New Zealand that would fall under the generic ‘wilderness’ label in countries such as the United States, but which do not sufficiently meet the strict legal criteria of a New Zealand wilderness area (Cessford & Dingwall 1997). In summary, the policy provided an ‘indigenous’ definition of wilderness, which reflected New Zealand’s unique social and ecological situation. It embodied ideas and sentiments about national identity – for example New Zealand as a nation of pioneers, explorers and adventurers who have developed a close relationship with the natural landscape. The details of the Wilderness Policy are presented in section 2.4.2.

For some commentators, the key driver of this transformation in the concept of wilderness in New Zealand was the strengthening of the New Zealand identity (see, for example, Shultis 1991). Through the establishment and growth of the wilderness resource, it is argued that New Zealand has been able to develop a more robust, and nationally distinct identity:

The strengthening of the New Zealand identity has led to increasing identification with, and pride in, the so-called ‘typical’ New Zealand landscapes and species, which in turn has resulted in the increased affection for the unmodified, uniquely New Zealand environment – wilderness. (Shultis 1997 p. 15)

The importance of wilderness and wild areas to New Zealand identity is supported by a number of authors (see Bell 1996; Booth & Simmons 2000; Fairburn 1989; Hall 1995; Hall & McArthur 1998; Hirschberg 1995; Runte 1987). Lochhead (1994) noted that by the early 1900s, nature protection was frequently regarded as the key to invoking a patriotic spirit in many countries across the Western world and that ‘this aspect of conservation was perhaps of
greatest importance in new countries like New Zealand where outstanding natural monuments and unique species met a cultural need to find an equivalent to the man made cultural treasures of Europe’ (p. 143). N. Clark (2004) proposed that New Zealanders used the natural environment as the ‘anchor’ for their national identity because of its uniqueness; its ability to draw all New Zealanders together under one common characteristic, and to separate or distinguish them from ‘outsiders’ who come from a different soil. And, with reference to early national park designation in New Zealand, Booth & Simmons (2000) noted: ‘the presence of these wilderness areas offered the opportunity to showcase spectacular natural features and so establish their [New Zealanders’] own claim to national identity’ (p. 39).

Shultis noted that the unique biogeography of New Zealand has had ‘a decisive impact on the way in which the New Zealand wilderness is perceived by its citizens’ (1997 p. 15). New Zealanders often believe that indigenous plant and animal life is of much greater value than exotic species, or ‘pests’ as they are often termed. Species that are unique to New Zealand such as the Kiwi (Apteryx), Kakapo (Strigops habroptila) and the Silver fern (Cyathea dealbata) help to strengthen the sense of national identity because they serve as reminders that New Zealand is distinct from the rest of the world. Bell (1996 p. 37) found that ‘various species of flora and fauna were exploited in efforts to claim a national symbol… the kiwi is embraced as a popular colloquialism to identify New Zealanders as kiwis’. The New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage’s decision to use several ‘natural’ symbols to represent New Zealand identity gives further support to this notion.

The formation of the New Zealand Natives Associations18 in the late nineteenth century was another example of the use of wild nature to promote national distinction, and it symbolised a rise in nationalistic feeling (Lochhead 1994). A large part of this movement was based around the protection of wild lands and native flora and fauna for patriotic causes (Sinclair 1988). The ‘pioneering spirit’ of the early colonisers is also embodied in the notion of New Zealand wilderness (Lochhead 1994). The idea that New Zealanders are a nation of explorers and adventurers, with a strong attachment to the land is a key element of the Wilderness Policy 1985 – as will be seen in Chapter Five. For many New Zealanders, therefore, wilderness (socially and ecologically, as a place and as a concept) is part of their heritage. Even if the majority of citizens never visit legally gazetted wilderness, it is still a symbol of who they are as a nation – a collective identity. This connection to the wilderness landscape is rooted in a discourse on the development of national identity: ‘New Zealand’s natural resources are a

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18 New Zealand Natives Associations were social organisations for persons born in New Zealand. They were concerned with issues such as establishing national symbols which promoted New Zealand’s uniqueness.
vehicle through which local, regional and national distinction is daily claimed and validated’ (Bell 1996, p. 33).

The next section presents the legal definition of wilderness in New Zealand through an overview of the various Acts, policies and plans that govern the management of wilderness.

### 2.3.2 Legislation relevant to wilderness management in NZ

Wilderness areas in New Zealand are provided for by a range of legislation which is administered by the Department of Conservation. Various policies interpret this legislation and provide guidance for wilderness managers. Conservation Management Strategies and Conservation Management Plans give specific direction as to how each wilderness area should be managed. Figure 2.1 illustrates the framework for wilderness management in New Zealand.

**Figure 2.1: Wilderness management in New Zealand**

[Diagram showing the framework for wilderness management in New Zealand]

Modified from Molloy & Reedy 2000, p. 162
Wilderness areas may be established under section 14 of the National Parks Act 1980, under section 47 of the Reserves Act 1977, or by zoning in management plans (Wilderness Advisory Group 1985). These Acts dictate what can or cannot occur in a wilderness area, and provide the foundation for the various policies and strategies that describe and define New Zealand wilderness. The provisions for wilderness areas contained in each act are almost identical. They are summarised in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Provisions for wilderness in New Zealand legislation

- Indigenous and natural resources shall be preserved
- No building or machinery shall be erected, constructed or maintained
- No livestock, vehicles, or motorised vessels (including hovercraft and jet boats) shall be allowed to be taken into or used in wilderness, and no helicopter or other motorised aircraft shall land or take off or hover for the purpose of embarking or disembarking passengers or goods
- No roads, tracks or trails shall be constructed
- The minister may authorise the doing of anything (including scientific tests or studies) on a wilderness area if he/she believes that it is in conformity with the conservation management strategy or conservation management plan for the area; and that its doing is desirable or necessary for the preservation of the area’s indigenous natural resources
- These provisions do not prevent actions deemed necessary in an emergency situation

Wilderness areas are intended to be managed in perpetuity; however their designation may be revoked under the relevant statutes if deemed necessary (Wilderness Advisory Group 1985). For example, an unforeseen circumstance (such as the discovery of a crucial natural resource) may result in the Minister of Conservation deciding that ‘Wilderness’ is no longer an appropriate land use for that area.\(^\text{19, 20}\).

2.4 Policies relevant to wilderness management

2.4.1 General Policy

There are two types of policy that are relevant to wilderness management in New Zealand. The first of these is a general policy. General policies have a statutory basis. They are written to interpret and implement legislation, and to provide direction and guidance for planners and conservation managers. An example of a general policy is the Conservation General Policy 2005 which provides for (among others) the implementation of the Conservation Act 1987. The second type of policy is a non-statutory policy which is written to provide guidance in a specific area of management or interest. These policies are written in accordance with, and

\(^{19}\) This decision would have to be taken on the recommendation of the Conservation Authority, and made in accordance with a conservation management strategy or management plan.

\(^{20}\) This is also the case with other types of conservation area in New Zealand, and is not unique to wilderness. It serves to emphasise that wilderness is a social construction, and can be made or un-made, based on the dominant views in society at a particular time in history.
must not derogate from, the relevant legislation. They are applied through management plans and strategies. An example is the Wilderness Policy 1985.

The Conservation General Policy (DOC 2005b) and the General Policy for National Parks (DOC 2005c) provide a very broad overview of New Zealand conservation policy. As such, both contain only brief references to remote and wilderness areas. Section 9.1(f) of the Conservation General Policy states that: ‘recreational opportunities at places should be managed to avoid or otherwise minimise any adverse effects (including cumulative effects) on… the qualities of peace and natural quiet, solitude, remoteness and wilderness, where present; and on the experiences of other people’ [emphasis added]. The General Policy for National Parks states in section 6(n) that ‘Wilderness areas should be large enough and sufficiently remote and buffered to be unaffected by human influences, except in minor ways’. Section 10.3 notes that ‘no roads, tracks or routes can be constructed and no building or machinery can be erected in a wilderness area within a national park’. Finally, section 12(b) notes that a national park management plan will ‘identify the need and justification for creating any new wilderness areas’.

Both general policies have a strong emphasis on identifying ‘outcomes of place’, which is important in the context of wilderness management because the outcomes dictate what is and what is not appropriate within wilderness, and help to protect the unique recreation opportunities it provides. Developing outcomes of place involves identifying the range of values provided at particular places on conservation land, and then specifying the outcomes managers hope to achieve at each place. Values can be described as ‘individual and collective conceptions that have emotional and symbolic components about what is important or desirable’ (Henning & Magun, 1989, p.5). Some of the values that people place on wilderness are readily apparent and easy to describe (tangible), while others are more difficult to articulate (intangible) (see Cole 2005; Schroeder 2007). The specific values that people place on wilderness are strongly associated with factors such as the history, culture, political and geographical situation of the particular country, the guiding legislation for wilderness management, and the extent to which individuals use, or identify with, the wilderness resource. There is a general consensus amongst users of the resource about the core values of wilderness. These values include solitude, remoteness and challenge and will be discussed in Chapter Four.
2.4.2 The Wilderness Policy 1985

The Wilderness Policy 1985 provides the most comprehensive description of the legislative concept of wilderness in New Zealand. As explained in section 2.3.1, the Policy was developed by a government appointed Wilderness Advisory Group (WAG), following the 1981 New Zealand Wilderness Conference (Cessford 2001). This description makes it clear that legally defined wilderness in New Zealand is primarily a recreational (as opposed to ecological) concept.

### Table 2.1: Key elements of the New Zealand Wilderness Policy 1985

| Wilderness areas | - Designated for their protection and managed to perpetuate their natural condition. Shall appear to have been affected only by the forces of nature, with 'any imprint of human interference substantially unnoticeable'
|                  | - Large enough to take at least two days to travel across on foot. Clearly defined topographical boundaries, adequately buffered to minimise the extent of human influence
|                  | - Developments such as huts, tracks, bridges and signs not permitted, and motorised access forbidden
|                  | - Should contain diversity in landscapes and recreational opportunities
|                  | - Wilderness areas may be established under section 14 of the National Parks Act, section 47 of the Reserves Act, or by zoning in management plans.
|                  | - Ideally managed in perpetuity but, if deemed necessary, status can be revoked under the relevant legislation.
|                  | - Areas which have wilderness character but do not meet the strict criteria of a wilderness area may be termed 'remote experience’ areas, and should be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Policy |
| The wilderness experience | - Personal and subjective. Embodies remoteness, discovery, solitude, freedom and romance, and fosters self-reliance and empathy with wild nature.
|                  | - A cultural concept which is compatible with the goals of nature conservation
|                  | - Important part of the range of recreation opportunities available to everyone in New Zealand, and of international significance
|                  | - Although it can be achieved in a variety of natural environments, some experiences are dependent upon a large, unmodified natural area |
| Wilderness management | - Developments such as huts, tracks, route markers and bridges are not appropriate. Any that exist should be removed or no longer maintained in order to retain natural wilderness qualities
|                  | - Adjoining lands should be managed as buffer zones. Facility development and motorised access in these areas will be discouraged
|                  | - Wilderness is a fragile resource, therefore overuse will be minimised by selecting remote areas where access is inherently difficult
|                  | - Commercial recreation activities may only be undertaken under license or permit to ensure that use is compatible with wilderness values
|                  | - The use of powered vehicles, boats or aircraft will not be permitted. This is because wilderness areas are ‘places for quiet enjoyment, free from human impact, and require physical endeavour to achieve in full measure the wilderness experience’
|                  | - Users of wilderness should be ‘self sufficient’, and depend on the natural environment for shelter and fuel only if this does not detract from wilderness values
|                  | - Logging, roading, hydro-electric development and mining are incompatible with wilderness.
|                  | - Temporary exceptions may apply to certain restrictions for search and rescue/emergency operations, pest control, scientific research and exploration
|                  | - Wilderness users will be encouraged to minimise their impact on the environment
|                  | - wilderness areas will be identified in management plans but their use will not be promoted. |
The Policy was written in accordance with the existing wilderness legislation (the National Parks Act 1980 and the Reserves Act 1977) and has been adopted by the Department of Conservation (previously Department of Lands and Survey, National Parks Authority, and New Zealand Forest Service). Although the policy itself does not have a statutory basis, its provisions are currently applied through statutory documents - Conservation Management Plans and Strategies, and also through the Department of Conservation Visitor Strategy (DOC 1996). It fulfils three main objectives. First, it identifies the criteria that are necessary to define an area as wilderness. Second, it provides clear direction on the characteristics that a wilderness experience should have, and finally it gives very detailed guidelines on how wilderness areas should be managed. The key elements of the Policy are summarised in Table 2.1. Many ‘Remote’ areas of conservation land are also managed to provide wilderness qualities that are outlined in the Policy. The objectives and implementation strategies of remote and wilderness areas in Fiordland National Park (the case study site for this research) are presented in Chapter Five.

2.5 Management plans, strategies and other documents relevant to wilderness management

Conservation Management Plans and Conservation Management Strategies are the key documents that guide the management of the New Zealand wilderness resource. These are statutory documents that direct the use and management of particular areas of conservation land. (The relevant plans and strategies for *Fiordland National Park* are discussed in detail in Chapter Five). There are also two national documents which, although they have no statutory basis, provide crucial guidance for the management of New Zealand wilderness, and to which extensive reference is made in the Management Plans and Management Strategies. The documents are the New Zealand Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (Taylor 1993) and the Visitor Strategy (DOC 1996).

2.5.1 Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a management tool which describes and maps recreation opportunities. A recreation opportunity comprises a combination of an activity, a setting and an experience (DOC 1996). ROS can be used to define where different types of recreation experiences are to be found (i.e. to inventory existing recreation opportunities) and how areas will need to be managed to maintain those experiences (Taylor 1993). It can also be used as a predictive tool, to show what opportunities *would* exist under different management
scenarios – for example what would happen to the recreation opportunities in an area if a new tramping track was created through the middle of it.

Recreation opportunities are classified along a continuum of settings from urban to wilderness, and each of the opportunities is defined and described in terms of experience characteristics, activity characteristics, physical, social and managerial characteristics. These characteristics vary with progression along the continuum, as do the types of activities that might be expected. For example, the range of activities at the urban-end of the spectrum is much more diverse than in a wilderness setting and the standard of facilities and services is much higher. A key assumption of ROS is that the experience characteristics described in the spectrum are those of experienced participants. This is because a person visiting a particular type of area for the first time will perceive things very differently to someone who is more familiar with the setting.

**Figure 2.3: The New Zealand Recreation Opportunity Spectrum settings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>URBAN</th>
<th>URBAN FRINGE</th>
<th>RURAL</th>
<th>BACK COUNTRY</th>
<th>REMOTE</th>
<th>WILDERNESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DRIVE IN</td>
<td>4x4 DRIVE IN</td>
<td>WALK IN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modified from Taylor 1993 p. 10

The New Zealand ROS identifies eight major types of land-based recreation opportunity (Figure 2.3). Remote and Wilderness recreation opportunities are two of these classes. Wilderness is the only setting that is recognised in legislation (DOC 2006a). Although ‘Remote’ and ‘Wilderness’ are defined as two distinct classes, the actual boundaries between the two often merge (Taylor 1993). Section 5.3.2 of the ROS guidelines states that, although the Wilderness Policy 1985 applies when mapping for ROS-related opportunities, some wilderness experiences, as defined by ROS, may not always meet the requirements of designated wilderness. This serves to highlight the fact that the New Zealand wilderness resource extends far beyond the boundaries of legally designated wilderness areas. The main characteristics of and Wilderness settings in New Zealand (as defined by ROS) are outlined in Table 2.2.
Table 2.2: Characteristics of Remote and Wilderness recreation opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Characteristics</th>
<th>Remote</th>
<th>Wilderness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans and experiencing a closeness to nature</td>
<td>Extremely high probability of experiencing complete isolation from the sights, sounds and activities of humans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor skills, challenge and risk are important, but some reliance can still be placed on human modification (e.g. tracks and huts)</td>
<td>Extremely high probability of no interaction with other user groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Users will be totally reliant on their outdoor skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very likely that there will be a high degree of closeness to nature, with a sense of discovery, solitude and freedom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Characteristics</th>
<th>Remote</th>
<th>Wilderness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big game hunting, tramping</td>
<td>Big game hunting, tramping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock climbing &amp; caving</td>
<td>Mountaineering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountaineering, ice and snowcraft</td>
<td>Nature tours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature tours, nature study</td>
<td>Kayaking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayaking, rafting, fishing</td>
<td>Rafting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight seeing/flying</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Setting</th>
<th>Remote</th>
<th>Wilderness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly natural landscape</td>
<td>Highly natural landscape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal apparent modification</td>
<td>No apparent modification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few facilities, limited to light tracks, with occasional bridges, huts and signs</td>
<td>No huts, tracks, bridges, signs or other facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-motorised access only</td>
<td>Non-motorised access only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access facilitated by light tracks and bridges, but often weather dependent</td>
<td>Minimum distance ½ to1 day’s walk from motorised access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum distance 1km or ½ day walk from motorised access</td>
<td>Foot access totally dependent upon the environment and resources and skill of the visitor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No minimum size, but generally greater than 1000ha</td>
<td>Minimum size 2000 ha. At least 2 days walk to traverse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually follow ridge lines or natural boundaries</td>
<td>Boundaries clearly defined by topography, usually ridge lines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Setting</th>
<th>Remote</th>
<th>Wilderness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group size usually small</td>
<td>Group size small</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit duration invariably overnight; usually several nights</td>
<td>Visit duration of at least one night, usually several nights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with other groups unlikely but not totally unexpected</td>
<td>Generally interaction with other groups is unexpected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managerial Setting</th>
<th>Remote</th>
<th>Wilderness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likely to be little regulation and regimentation, although management will be visible</td>
<td>Should be no discernable management presence (exceptions: search and rescue operations)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some facilities provided (e.g. tracks, bridges, huts)</td>
<td>The wilderness policy applies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations to service and manage facilities may occasionally be present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5.2 The Visitor Strategy (DOC 1996)

The Visitor Strategy (DOC 1996) was written in order to manage the goals of protected natural areas with the demands of recreation and tourism (Boyes 1998). It is regarded as the most important piece of Department of Conservation policy relating to visitor management, and it contains detailed information about the kinds of people who are believed to visit remote and wilderness areas. The strategy has five major goals: 1) protection; 2) fostering visits; 3) managing tourism concessions on protected lands; 4) informing and educating visitors and 5) Visitor safety.

Based on the ROS assessment of recreational opportunities, the Visitor Strategy identifies seven distinct groups who visit New Zealand conservation lands (Figure 2.4) and defines and describes each group in terms of activity, setting and experience characteristics. Visitors are classified along a continuum which is closely aligned with ROS. However, there is not a perfect correlation between visitor group and recreation setting because most types of visitor tend to use more than one ROS class (Taylor 1993). The seven visitor groups range from ‘Short Stop Travellers’ who seek brief recreation experiences in accessible, partly-modified environments with a high standard of facilities and services, through to ‘Remoteness Seekers’ who demand experiences of a long duration in a natural, remote and challenging environment with few or no facilities and services:

Figure 2.4: The seven visitor groups in the DOC Visitor Strategy

- Short Stop Travellers (SST)
- Day Visitors (DV)
- Over Nighters (ON)
- Back Country Comfort Seekers (BCC)
- Back Country Adventurers (BCA)
- Remoteness Seekers (RS)
- Thrill Seekers (TS)

Using these visitor group descriptions, the Department of Conservation attempts to manage areas for particular visitor groups. For example, an accessible back country track with serviced huts would be managed primarily for back country comfort seekers, whereas an inaccessible wilderness area with no facilities or services would be managed largely for Remoteness Seekers.

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21 ‘Thrill Seekers’ do not fit neatly onto the continuum, as the activities that they undertake (such as bungee jumping, back country skiing and jet boating) can take place in a variety of settings.

22 ‘Back country’ is a setting on the New Zealand Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. It is used by the Department of Conservation to describe areas which are relatively accessible and suitable for visitors of an intermediate skill level (Joyce & Sutton 2009). More detail on this visitor setting can be found in Taylor 1993.

23 ‘Huts’ are structures on New Zealand conservation land which provide shelter (and/or accommodation) for day and overnight visitors. They range from small shelters to large, serviced, 40 bunk huts (e.g. on the Great Walks).
The group which is most relevant to the current study is ‘Remoteness Seekers’. The characteristics of this visitor group are outlined in Table 2.3. Primarily because of the difficulties associated with contacting ‘Remoteness Seekers’, there was (and still is) limited data available about this visitor group. However, this still remains the most comprehensive and detailed description of users of the wilderness resource that the Department of Conservation has published to date. The accuracy of this data (in relation to findings from the current study) is discussed in Chapter Eleven.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.3: Remoteness Seekers visitor group characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting and accessibility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of visit and activities undertaken</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience sought/degree of risk</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilities/services sought</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make-up of visitors and visitor numbers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Projected use</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DOC 1996, p. 30

2.6 Tourism and wilderness

The Visitor Strategy also contains guidelines for managing tourism concessions on conservation land\textsuperscript{24}. In the Strategy, ‘tourism’ is interpreted as synonymous with commercial recreation: ‘if [visitors] use and pay for facilities and services provided by the private sector, then tourism can be said to be taking place’ (\textit{ibid.} p. 38)\textsuperscript{25}. As noted in Chapter One, this is the interpretation of tourism which is adopted in the present study – ‘tourists’ are defined as individuals who use facilities and services provided by the private sector during their wilderness trip, and ‘independent visitors’ are people who do not make use of such services.

\textsuperscript{24} A concession is an official authorisation granted to conduct commercial operations in an area managed by the Department.

\textsuperscript{25} Despite making this distinction between tourism and independent use of the conservation estate, the Visitor Strategy does not distinguish between the two visitor groups (tourists and independent users). This omission has caused a significant amount of controversy and criticism amongst outdoor recreation groups.
The Conservation Act 1987 states that one of the key functions of the Department of Conservation is to ‘foster’ recreation and to ‘allow’ for tourism. This indicates that tourism is a valid use of New Zealand conservation land, but at the same time, it implies that recreation is different from, and should have priority over, tourism. The complexity of this issue is amplified by the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between ‘tourism’ and ‘recreation’ (or ‘tourists’ and ‘recreationists’). Much of the current tourism and recreation literature states that the demarcation line between the two has become extremely fuzzy (see, for example, Bodewes 1981; Crompton & Richardson 1986; Hall & Jenkins 1995). Jansen-Verbeke & Dietvorst (1987) stated that ‘in the perception of the individual at least, the distinction between recreation and tourism is becoming irrelevant’ (p. 263), and Pigram (1985, p. 184) argued:

Little success has been afforded to those attempting to differentiate between recreation and tourism and such distinctions appear founded upon the assumption that outdoor recreation appeals to the rugged, self-reliant element in the population, whereas tourism caters more overtly for those seeking diversion without too much discomfort.

Despite this, some researchers (e.g. Hall & Page 2002; Shaw & Williams 1994) maintain that the distinction is still important. A number of (often very vocal) outdoor recreationists in New Zealand give strong support to this view, and maintain that there is no comparison between the two. In their eyes, recreationists visit independently and use their own skills and initiatives, while tourists pay a commercial operator to ‘do the hard work for them’ (see, for example, Round 2006; Spearpoint 2007). These individuals believe that tourist activities are different from traditional, independent recreation, and some argue that tourism should not be permitted in wilderness. There has also been significant debate over whether New Zealanders can, or should, be considered tourists when they visit conservation land. Many Kiwi outdoor recreationists believe that they should not, because they are visiting their own country (again, see Round 2006 and Spearpoint 2007). This perspective is consistent with the definitions proposed by Hall (1995) and Helber (1988), who believe that tourism involves an infusion of new visitors and ‘new’ money into a region, whereas recreation typically refers to leisure activities undertaken by the residents of that particular region. This is a complex issue which it is not possible to explore thoroughly in this thesis. I will return to it in more detail in Chapter Three.

Although this thesis focuses solely on independent use of the New Zealand wilderness, the issue of tourism in wilderness was mentioned frequently by respondents. Because of this, it is important that the reader has some knowledge of the conditions under which tourism is permitted in wilderness. The following two sections provide a broad overview of the legal and
policy framework for managing tourism concessions on conservation land. The specific provisions for concessions in remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland National Park will be presented in Chapter Five.

2.6.1 Concessions

Concessions are required for all commercial and business activities that are undertaken on conservation land (DOC, 2005c). Concessionaires pay fees for the privilege of obtaining commercial or other benefits from public land. The way the fee is charged depends on the type of activity and the current market rates (ibid). The concessions system helps to ensure that concession activities are compatible with the Department of Conservation’s primary aim of protecting the land and other resources. It also helps to ensure that services and facilities are appropriate, and that other activities do not conflict with visitor enjoyment (ibid).

Concessions fall into two categories: recreation/tourism concessions and non-recreation concessions. Tourism concessions include accommodation facilities, transport services, commercial education or instruction activities and guiding operations. Non-recreation concessions include activities such as filming, grazing and telecommunication facilities. All concession activities are required to be consistent with the current Conservation Management Plan or the Management Strategy for the area, and any negative effects on the environment must be minimised (DOC, 2005a). The majority of concession applications are initiated by an individual or a company, although occasionally some opportunities are publicly tendered by the Department of Conservation (Parr 2000).

Tourism concessions fulfil an important role in helping the Department to provide a range of recreation opportunities for visitors (DOC 1996). Various Acts of Parliament direct concessions management and also give the Department legal authority to charge concession fees. They make it illegal for commercial operators to run a business in such areas without authorisation, and contain offence provisions in them which allow the Department to prosecute (ibid). The main piece of legislation is the Conservation Act. Under part 3B of the Act, the Department of Conservation is given the legal authority to control or restrict concessionaire activities. This has meant that limits have been placed on the commercial use of some areas. (Parr 2000).

The Conservation Amendment Act 1996 introduced the requirement for applicants to identify the possible effects of their proposed activities, and to suggest ways in which any adverse
effects can be reduced (DOC 1996). The decision about whether to accept or reject a proposal is very much based around the level of detail in this assessment (Parr 2000). A consequence of this is that the Department of Conservation has frequently lacked the information necessary to decline concession applications (due to a lack of visitor use and impact monitoring). This has led to a proliferation of commercial activities on conservation land, and has resulted in criticism from conservation advocates over the Department’s apparent ‘weakness’ in the face of pressure from the tourism industry (Chamberlain 2003).

2.6.2 The Visitor Strategy and concessions

The Visitor Strategy (introduced in section 2.5.2) was one of the main responses to increased pressure on public conservation land from international tourists (Molloy 1997). Among other things, the Strategy provides direction as to how the various pieces of concession legislation are to be administered. Section 3.3 of the Strategy outlines the issues relating to tourism concessions management, and states the Department’s goals and guiding principles for this area. The important role of commercial operators in helping the Department to manage a ‘range of recreational opportunities in different settings’ (DOC 1996, p. 22) is acknowledged, and concessions are described as having ‘significant potential for providing satisfying visitor experiences’ (ibid. p. 41). In relation to the concessions allocation process, the Strategy states:

Where the impacts of increasing visitor numbers to a site are unknown, the Department will adopt a precautionary approach until such time as it is clearly demonstrated that increasing visitor numbers pose no significant problem

(DOC 1996 p. 41)

A primary condition for any concession application is that it must be consistent with the current Conservation Management Plan or Strategy for that area (DOC 1996). These documents are therefore extremely important in giving guidance for the concessions allocation process. The Visitor Strategy notes that some strategies or plans may ‘provide specific guidance on the type of commercial operations that are appropriate in different areas’ (p. 42). Until now, however, guidance has tended to be given in the more general form of overall management objectives for the area, and very few existing plans or strategies provide adequate guidance or direction about what is an appropriate level or type of commercial activity in an area (Parr 2000). Management objectives are often ambiguous and non-specific, leaving the decision over whether or not to allocate a concession up to the individual processing the application (D. Kula, pers. comm. September 2004). This style of management has been heavily criticised in recent years for being inappropriate and inadequate.

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26 This is termed an ‘Environmental Impact Assessment’ (EIA), and is carried out by the applicant as part of the concessions application process (DOC 2005c).
(Chamberlain 2003). With reference to existing tourism policy and legislation, Les Molloy claimed that:

…these fine policies are being steadily eroded and compromised by sectors of the tourist industry and DOC’s inability (or unwillingness) to stem the pressures – all to make the mountain climb quicker and easier for tourists on tight time schedules

(Molloy & Potton 2007, p. 315)

Largely as a result of these criticisms and concerns, some of the more recent management plans (for example the Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2008) now stipulate the types and levels of use of commercial tourism activities that are acceptable in particular areas. This development has been welcomed by some conservation and wilderness protection advocates, but it has also caused a significant amount of controversy amongst those who would prefer to see further development of the tourism industry rather than increased wilderness protection.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the meaning of wilderness in contemporary Western society and has shown how interpretations of wilderness have changed over time to reflect changes in social, economic and political conditions. Wilderness has evolved from something which was to be feared, hated and ‘tamed’, into an idealistic, spiritual refuge from the pressures of modern society. For many people in Western society, wilderness now represents a contrast to industrialisation, capitalism and urban culture. It is regarded as a symbol of humility and restraint – a sacred place where nature is allowed to reign supreme, and where, should they choose to visit, people can escape the ‘scourges’ of modern living. The magnitude of these changes in people’s attitudes towards wilderness gives support to the view that wilderness is a socially constructed concept; that the meanings and values associated with wilderness are created and recreated by particular societies and groups of people, and that they reflect the dominant ideologies in society at any one particular time.

Legislative wilderness in New Zealand (although based on the North American model) has evolved to a point where it is now distinctly different from its Western counterparts. The contemporary definition evolved during a search for a unique New Zealand identity following independence from England. Consequently, New Zealand wilderness now reflects particular aspects of the nation’s culture and identity, such as freedom, independence, a close relationship with nature and a rugged pioneering spirit. The rise in nationalistic feeling since

27 Les Molloy is a prominent New Zealand wilderness protection advocate in New Zealand who has been involved in the wilderness debate since the early 1970s.
independence has had a pervasive influence on the development of New Zealand wilderness policy and legislation, and is also likely to have affected the way in which New Zealanders view and approach wilderness. The cultural and historic dimensions of the wilderness concept (reflected in policy and legislation) may influence how wilderness is interpreted and used by New Zealanders, and might help to explain why there is evidence of growing resistance to the increasing use of wilderness for tourism. It is possible that tourists (or tour operators – particularly if they are from overseas) may not have the same understanding of wilderness as New Zealanders, and may therefore approach wilderness in a very different way. This could have implications for the way in which international tourists and New Zealanders interact in wilderness.

Given the importance of tourism to New Zealand’s economy and the high profile of ‘nature’ within the tourism industry, it is important to examine the development of tourism (and more specifically, wilderness tourism) in New Zealand. The following chapter does this, and reviews international research which has examined the issue of tourism in wilderness.
Chapter 3

The development of wilderness tourism in New Zealand

3.1 Introduction

Tourism is an important component of wilderness management in contemporary Western society (Booth & Simmons 2000; Butler & Boyd 2000; Eagles et al. 2002; Pigram & Jenkins 2006). As noted in Chapter Two, tourism is generally accepted as a valid use of New Zealand conservation land. However, its presence in remote and wilderness areas is often not seen in such a favourable light. The rapid (and extremely successful) growth of the New Zealand tourism industry in the past few decades has sparked controversy in certain circles about the role and appropriateness of tourism in wilderness (and conservation land in general) and also about the way in which recreational and tourist use of wilderness should be managed. While an in-depth exploration of this debate is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is still important to be aware of the issues surrounding wilderness tourism in New Zealand. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to provide a broad overview of the development of wilderness tourism in New Zealand, and to introduce some of the issues associated with this growth. The chapter is divided into three parts. Section one outlines the growth and development of the New Zealand tourism industry, and the associated growth of wilderness tourism. Section two discusses some of the key factors which have contributed to the growth. Finally, section three presents some of the international literature on impacts and interpretations of tourism in wilderness and introduces various theoretical ideas that have been used to understand these impacts.

3.2 Worldwide growth in wilderness tourism

Tourism is one of the world’s largest industries, with its global export earnings reaching US$856 billion (United Nations World Tourism Organisation 2009). The nature of the global tourism industry has undergone a significant change in recent years, and there has been a move away from mass tourism and organised trips towards ‘new’ types of tourism such as nature-based, adventure and wilderness tourism, where visitors place great value on authentic experiences and interacting with the natural environment (Urry 2002). This has led to a dramatic increase in the demand for tourist activities in and around national parks, with a growing diversity in the types of activity and locations where tourism activities take place (Gonzalez & Otero 2002). It has also had a profound impact on protected natural areas worldwide, with an associated increase in commercial pressure on wilderness areas
(Kirkpatrick 2001). These impacts have been particularly evident in countries (such as New Zealand) where the natural environment is the primary draw card for international tourists, and this has led some commentators to suggest that tourism poses one of the biggest contemporary threats to wilderness:

Wilderness in New Zealand remains threatened, especially by tourism. Since 1981 we have received a five-fold increase in overseas visitors, from half a million annually to possibly 2.5 million in 2006. Such growth is incompatible with the preservation of wilderness, and its impact is acutely felt by traditional wilderness users (Molloy 2006 p. 34).

The dramatic increase in the demand for wilderness and protected natural area tourism has been well-documented in the literature (see for example Buckley 2004a, 2006; Ceballos-Lascurain 1996; Cessford & Thompson 2002; Dustin, McAvoy & Schultz 1987; Eagles 2002; Kirkpatrick 2001). This growth has been attributed to various factors, including increasing leisure time in the Western world, improved access to wilderness, a greater awareness and appreciation of the natural environment, a growing dissatisfaction with urban life, and a desire to ‘escape’ to more natural surroundings (Pigram & Jenkins 2006).

It is important to note here that a recent and widely publicised paper (Pergams & Zarodic 2008) which analysed park visitation data from the United States, Japan and Spain, challenged this notion, and suggested that we are experiencing an ‘ongoing and fundamental shift away from nature-based recreation’ (p. 2295). This article stimulated widespread concern about increasing human disconnection with the natural environment, and the implications this could have for nature conservation and biodiversity protection (see, for example, Kareiva 2008; Williams 2008). However, a more recent (and equally high profile) study undertaken at the University of Cambridge (Balmford, Beresford, Green, Naidoo, Walpole, & Manica 2009) which sought to assess the validity of these claims, concluded that ‘Our data set on protected area visits has far broader geographical coverage that any others we are aware of, yet yielded no evidence to support the idea of a consistent global decline in nature-based recreation’ (p. 3). Although the authors of this study acknowledged that per capita park visitation was declining in certain parks in some countries, they found that total visit numbers to protected natural areas was increasing in the majority of the countries for which they were able to obtain data (15 out of 20) and that falling visitation was restricted to a few well-off countries. They proposed several explanations for this decline, including an increasingly urbanised lifestyle in Western countries, displacement to other, more remote areas where visitors are not counted, and a shift in preference away from domestic protected natural areas, to parks in developing countries as these locations become more accessible.
As yet, there is no data to suggest that nature based tourism is declining in New Zealand. A recent report by the Ministry of Tourism (2009) noted that the overall trend for nature based tourism in New Zealand has been ‘steadily increasing’. However, the report also found that international visitor participation in nature-based activities over the 2004-2008 period has ‘remained stable’. This may reflect a decrease in the number of international tourist arrivals in recent years, or could be indicative of the kinds of changes reported by Pergams & Zarodic (2008). If this trend continues (or affects domestic participation in nature-based tourism), then more research attention may be required in this area. No specific data for wilderness tourism in New Zealand was uncovered.

The factors which are believed to have contributed to the growth in wilderness and nature-based tourism are discussed in a New Zealand context in section 3.3.2. Before this, I will outline the development of tourism in New Zealand, and more specifically, the growth of wilderness tourism.

### 3.3 The development of tourism in New Zealand

Tourism is a relatively young industry in New Zealand, yet one which now represents the country’s largest export earner (Tourism New Zealand 2009b). Tourism has been occurring on a small scale in New Zealand since the early 1800s, but it was not until the 1980s (when there was a major increase in international tourist arrivals) that it became widely recognised as an important sector of the economy (Britton, Le Heron & Pawson 1992; Pearce & Simmons 1997). Early tourism to New Zealand was restricted by the country’s isolation, lack of accommodation facilities and transport and communication difficulties (Tourism New Zealand 2001), and was thus limited to a few adventurous visitors from Australia and Europe (Perkins, Devlin, Simmons & Batty 1993). These tourists came primarily to view New Zealand’s scenic natural attractions such as Lake Rotomahana’s pink and white terraces (which were destroyed by the eruption of Mount Tarawera in 1886), and the South Island’s mountains, lakes and fiords (Tourism New Zealand 2001).

In the late 1800s, spurred by romantic descriptions of the New Zealand scenery from European travel writers, artists and poets, the government began to invest heavily in tourism development (Tourism New Zealand 2001). Some examples of the romantic descriptions of New Zealand’s wild and natural landscape can be seen in the following quotations:

28 Notable figures who wrote about New Zealand in this way included Victorian novelist Anthony Trollope, English writer Mark Twain, Irish poet Thomas Bracken, English poet Rudyard Kipling and the famous novelist and angler Zane Gray.
A land yet fresh from the hand of its maker, formed in all the wilds prodigality of natural beauty. A land of stupendous mountains, roaring cataracts, silvery cascades, fantastic volcanic formations, magnificent landscapes, noble forests and picturesque lakes.

(Thomas Bracken, cited in Watkins 1987, p. 11)

…the whole panorama seemed to possess an unearthly beauty, delicate, ephemeral, veiled by some mysterious light. To make the moment perfect, there were larks above my head, singing as if the magic of the sunset inspired their song.

(Zane Grey, cited in Tourism New Zealand 2001, p. 7)

The New Zealand government began direct involvement in tourism through the production of tourist brochures, and working with the travel agent Thomas Cook and Son (McBean 1976). In February 1901, the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts was set up. This was the first government department in the world established specifically to develop the tourism industry (Tourism New Zealand 2001). From the late 1880s, improvements in transport and communications (such as the arrival of public motor transport29 and the extension of the road and rail network) enabled a sizable growth in overseas and domestic tourism, and by the 1930s, new markets were growing in North America (New Zealand Tourist and Publicity Department 1976). The central Government continued to play a key role in the growth of tourism during this period by facilitating travel and developing the transport and accommodation infrastructure (Moran 1979). By the 1950s, the Government had established a network of tourism facilities at popular areas, a travel booking, planning and information service, a variety of coach tours, and an extensive programme of overseas publicity. Tracks, bridges and huts were built, in major tourist areas such as Rotorua, Mount Cook, Milford Sound and Queenstown; roads were improved, and the Tourist Hotel Corporation (THC) was set up in 1956 to develop a network of government-owned hotels at tourist attractions nationwide (ibid.).

As a result of the enormous boost that tourism provided for the New Zealand economy, these developments were widely heralded as major achievements for the nation. However, not everyone was so enthusiastic about the expansion of the tourism industry. Several prominent individuals expressed early concern about the impacts of rapid tourism growth on local communities and the environment. During a visit to New Zealand in the late 1800s, George Bernard Shaw declared that:

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29 Motorcars were used in New Zealand by commercial passenger services such as the Mount Cook Company in 1906 and Newmans in 1911 (Tourism New Zealand 2001).
New Zealand is the sort of place you should keep for the recreation of your own workers and people and not so much for tourists… you should reserve your attractions for those who have earned the right to enjoy them, so that you may never become dependent on migratory wasters!

(Watkins 1987, p. 6)

And in 1904, in response to a Government proposal to improve the road to Mount Cook for tourists, the editor of the Nelson Colonist wrote:

Tourists are all very well, but the people of the colony who have to bear the weight of taxation are entitled to first consideration, and until the main arterial lines are completed, the Government should be very careful how it authorises expenditure merely for tourists, indeed, the opinion is growing that too much has already been spent with a view to encouraging tourists

(Watkins 1987, p. 17)

This type of attitude has surfaced repeatedly (albeit, on a relatively small scale) since these early days. For example, in the mid 1950s, a politician launched an attack on the tourism industry because he thought that ‘foreign tourists’ should not be benefiting from subsidies introduced for New Zealanders: ‘His solution was brutally simply: “Keep ‘em out!”’ (Watkins 1987, p. 17). More recent examples of such attitudes are presented later in this section and again in Chapter Nine.

Tourism began to assume a much higher political profile at the end of the 1950s when the first scheduled jet air flight drastically reduced the travel time from long haul destinations to New Zealand. From this point onwards, international tourism increased significantly. In 1963/64 there were 100,000 overseas visitors, and by 1992, this had risen to one million per year (Perkins et al. 1993). Worldwide government reforms of the 1980s affected New Zealand like most other Western nations and led to the privatisation of many of the nation’s assets, including a significant proportion of the tourism resources that the Government had owned and operated – such as hotels, marketing operations and tour operators (Cloke & Perkins 1998).

The Tourism Department was replaced in 1991 with the New Zealand Tourism Board (NZTB), whose role is to market New Zealand to international visitors. The Board immediately took an ‘aggressive’ stance to tourism marketing (Cloke & Perkins 1998), aiming to increase international visitors by 200 per cent by the year 2000. Reminiscent of the earlier warnings about the increasing impacts of tourism, there was a significant backlash amongst certain sectors of the New Zealand population shortly after these predictions were

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30 This restructuring also led to the reorganisation of New Zealand land management agencies, creating the Department of Conservation in 1987.
made public. The growth targets set by the NZTB were widely criticised for failing to recognise the extent to which increased visitation would impinge upon traditional wilderness uses (Molloy 1997).

Although failing to reach these estimated growth targets, the number of international visitors to New Zealand doubled between 1993 and 2006, to reach almost 2.5 million in 2007 (Tourism New Zealand 2008). The NZ Tourism Strategy 2015 estimates that this number will grow by around 4 per cent per annum and result in 3.5 million arrivals in 2015 (ibid.). The tourism industry has grown to become New Zealand's largest earner of foreign exchange (Tourism New Zealand 2009b) and contributes almost ten percent of Gross Domestic Product (Tourism Industry Association 2009). Figure 3.1 illustrates the significant contribution that international tourism now makes to the New Zealand economy:

**Figure 3.1: The contribution of tourism to the New Zealand economy**

Image removed: ‘The Power of Tourism: How tourism dollars support New Zealand’

**Source: Tourism Industry Association 2009, p. 1**

The fact that the current Prime Minister (John Key) is also the Minister of Tourism gives some indication of the importance now accorded to the tourism industry in New Zealand.
The natural environment and the wilderness landscape still represent the most important tourism resource for international visitors in New Zealand today (Ministry of Tourism 2009). Conservation land, and in particular, national parks, and images of wilderness are crucial to the country’s tourism industry. The 1991 International Visitor Survey reported that 55 per cent of international visitors to New Zealand visited a forest park or a National Park during their stay (DOC, 1991), and overseas visitors now make up over 75 per cent of the visitor numbers in some parks (NZTB & DOC 1993). A joint report written by the New Zealand Tourism Board and the Department of Conservation in 1993 remarked that:

> The importance of the conservation estate and its unique features cannot be underestimated…A large number of international visitors are attracted to New Zealand because of the image they have of New Zealand’s scenic attractiveness

(NZTB & DOC, 1993)

A recent report produced by the New Zealand Ministry of Tourism (2009) noted that ‘natural attractions are widely regarded as New Zealand’s key draw card for international visitors’ (p. 1), and that in 2008, 70 per cent of all international trips to New Zealand were ‘nature-based’. The importance of wilderness and wild landscapes to the tourism industry reflects the fact that the early National Parks in New Zealand were developed primarily as recreation and tourism attractions31. Their choice of location mirrored the areas of early tourism development and attraction at the time, and the management and development of tracks and facilities in many of these parks was initially undertaken by the tourist department (Tourism New Zealand 2001).

Despite the obvious benefits of tourism to the New Zealand economy, the strength of feeling against the rapid growth of the industry was (and still is) evident in the popular press, where a number of people (including politicians) have written articles voicing their frustration about the potential social and environmental impacts of such a rapid increase in international visitor numbers (see, for example Chamberlain 1992; Round 1995; Round 2006; Turei 2008)32, and a number of conservation and recreation advocates firmly believe that tourism is inappropriate and unnecessary in wilderness. This issue is discussed further in the following section, which begins by detailing the growth of wilderness tourism in New Zealand.

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31 Tongariro and Egmont National Park were established for cultural and agriculture-protection reasons respectively.

32 The anger of some interest groups was also enhanced by DOC’s perceived alliance with tourism interests in 1993, producing the document ‘International Visitors and the New Zealand Conservation Estate’, which attempted to identify DOC areas where visitor capacity could be extended.
3.3.1 Wilderness tourism in New Zealand

Based on definitions used by the New Zealand Ministry of Tourism, wilderness tourism can be broadly described as a trip (not for the purposes of remuneration) to part of New Zealand’s wilderness resource, located at least 40 kilometres away from home. (See Ministry of Tourism 2009a). However, as noted in Chapter Two, many New Zealanders argue that they are not tourists when they visit conservation land because they are simply exploring part of their own country. This view has been expressed recently on several occasions in a popular New Zealand outdoor recreation bulletin. For example: Round (2006, p. 15) stated ‘when we visit our own places, we cannot be tourists. Tourists are strangers; we are not’. Similarly, Spearpoint (2007) lamented the fact that ‘kiwis have no more or less recognition in their own back country than do visitors from Israel, Germany or America’ (p. 33), and argued that New Zealanders should not be regarded as ‘tourists’ or ‘visitors’ to the country’s conservation land because it is their home:

I met only three other people during my trip. They were wet as shags, but keen and coping with their adventure in their own place, their own back country lands. No slick tourist operation, no “interpretation”, no guides, no advertising, no profile… how can you call these people “visitors” when they are going home? This is their home, their country and where they belong. (Spearpoint 2007, p. 34)

Tourism is thus seen by some New Zealanders as a phenomenon which is associated primarily with commercial use of the conservation estate, and one which is likely to be unwelcome in wilderness. (The implications of this will be discussed in detail in Chapter Nine). For this reason, as stated in Chapter One, the term ‘wilderness tourism’ is used in the current thesis to describe the process which occurs when visitors (tourists) use and pay for facilities and services provided by the private sector in a wilderness setting.\(^{33}\)

It is difficult to be precise about the extent of wilderness tourism in New Zealand, but based on the limited information available about park tourism in general, it is possible to say that wilderness tourism is a relatively recent phenomenon which has been increasing rapidly in popularity in the past ten to fifteen years, in line with worldwide trends. Outdoor and nature-based tourism (of which wilderness tourism is a part) is frequently cited as ‘one of the fastest growing sectors in the leisure and tourism industry in the developed world today’\(^{34}\) (DOC 2006a, p. 126) and there is clear evidence that tourism activities (i.e. those which require a license from the Department of Conservation) have been increasing on New Zealand’s conservation land. Figures show a 79 per cent increase in the total number of recreation and

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\(^{33}\) As noted in Chapter One, ‘wilderness setting’ is used to describe wilderness areas and adjacent lands offering qualities of a wilderness experience (as defined in the New Zealand Wilderness Policy 1985).

\(^{34}\) Refer to section 3.2 for discussion of the 2008 study which challenged this notion.
tourism concessions approved by the Department over the three years from 1998-2000 (Chamberlain 2003). Various policy and management documents for national parks and other areas of New Zealand conservation land also indicate that tourist use of the more remote areas is increasing (see, for example, DOC 2006a).

### 3.3.2 Factors influencing the rise of wilderness tourism in New Zealand

Greater environmental awareness internationally and an increase in the numbers of young independent travellers [to New Zealand] has resulted in an increase in adventure and eco-tourism activities and has accelerated commercial opportunities in these fields of outdoor and nature-based tourism.

(DOC 2006a, p. 126)

A number of factors are significant in understanding the rise in wilderness tourism in New Zealand. Some of these are global forces, and others are more specific to New Zealand.

The first major contributing factor is that people are becoming much more aware of, and interested in experiencing and learning about conservation and wilderness-type environments (Eagles 1995; Poon 1993). Ecotourism is considered to be the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry, and consequently parks and wilderness areas have significant potential to become major tourist destinations (Eagles et al. 2002). Second, there has been a general increase in the level of environmental awareness in the Western world since the 1970, and a growing desire to live a more active and healthy lifestyle, which often involves a connection with nature and wild environments such as wilderness (ibid.). MacKay, Perkins & Espiner (2009) discuss the concept of ‘amenity migration’, and the way in which resources such as national parks now serve to attract tourists to particular regions (see also Buckley, Sander, Ollenburg & Warnken 2006; Moss 2006; Hall 2006). Third, improvements in technology and transport have meant that wilderness environments which were once the exclusive domain of only the fittest and most adventurous tourists are now accessible to almost anyone who has the money to pay for the trip, as demonstrated in The Christchurch Press (1995):

> Jet boating has opened up the wilderness – particularly in the South Island. Whereas it once took days or even weeks of hard slogging by foot to reach almost inaccessible back country, the jet boat has enabled the curious to use remote waterways for relatively quick access. (p. 6)

Improvements in outdoor equipment have also made the wilderness much more accessible for tourism. Equipment such as tents, packs, sleeping mats, wet weather gear, kayaks and mountaineering equipment is now much stronger, lighter, reliable, and less expensive, meaning that tourism operators are able to take groups into remote areas within relative safety and comfort.
There are also some New Zealand-specific reasons for the growth in wilderness tourism. First, the importance of outdoor and wilderness-type recreation in New Zealand culture has provided opportunities for the growth of tourism in activities which had long been practised by independent New Zealand recreationists (Devlin 1993, 1995): ‘the outdoors has always been an integral and accessible part of New Zealand culture and has long been an attraction to our visitors’ (Tourism New Zealand 2001, p. 20). Such activities include tramping, hunting, fishing, mountaineering and camping. The strong existing outdoors culture (based around the pioneering notions of exploration and adventure) has thus provided a solid base on which to build a substantial network of wilderness tourism activities and services.

Second, outdoor recreation and tourism have historically been associated with the setting aside of land for conservation purposes in New Zealand. As noted earlier, many of the early National Parks were created primarily for the purposes of recreation and tourism, and so this trend has naturally extended to the use of wilderness for tourism. The dramatic differences between New Zealand’s natural attractions and the landscape of the ‘mother country’ (England) were the ‘main drawcards for early tourists’ to New Zealand, and remain so today:

> New Zealand as a tourist destination came to fame through its natural unspoiled beauty and the activities that beauty offered. The early icons still exist today as pivotal attractions.

(Tourism New Zealand 2001, p. 12)

Finally, much of the increase in popularity of wilderness tourism can be attributed to the active role of the New Zealand Government in promoting the wilderness environment, and wilderness activities to tourists. Thomas Donne (the first head of the Department of Tourism and Health Resorts) helped to establish New Zealand as a key international outdoor recreation destination through the importing of game species such as trout and deer for fishing and hunting – both of which are now popular wilderness tourism activities. Tourism New Zealand has also intensively marketed New Zealand’s image of ‘clean, green outdoors’ and vast expanses of wilderness. The ‘100% Pure’ campaign began in 1999, and was based around the core image of New Zealand as a clean, green, scenically beautiful destination with vast expanses of untouched wilderness. It was designed to ‘put the core aspects of what makes New Zealand unique onto the centre stage’ (Tourism New Zealand 2009a). Figure 3.2

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35 It is ironic that many of these introduced species which attract so many international ‘wilderness’ tourists are now regarded as ‘pests’, and are subject to extensive control/eradication programmes in many protected natural areas (much to the anger of many keen hunters and anglers who view these species as resources rather than pests).

36 Tourism New Zealand is a Crown Entity established under the New Zealand Tourism Board Act 1991; an international marketing agency, with the primary role of marketing New Zealand internationally as a visitor destination. The core message promoted by the organisation is ‘showcasing the beauty and uniqueness of New Zealand’s landscapes, culture and people’ (Tourism New Zealand 2001).
presents some of the images used in this campaign. These images, and others used in the campaign, clearly promote the view of New Zealand as a ‘pristine wilderness’, replete with ‘untouched bush’, mountains, lakes and beaches, and this has undoubtably played a major role in encouraging the growth of wilderness tourism.

**Figure 3.2: Images used in the 100% Pure New Zealand marketing campaign**

2 images have been removed

**Implications of increasing wilderness tourism**

One of the main implications of the growing popularity of wilderness tourism has been a rapid rise in the number of private operators running tourism operations on conservation land. This has been largely due to the increased demand for tourism activities, but is also partly the result of a Department of Conservation drive to improve efficiency and reduce budgetary requirements (Cloke & Perkins 1998). Although there are obvious benefits associated with a growth in tourism (such as increased revenue and more employment opportunities), a number of concerns have also been raised about the impact of this on traditional independent recreational use of conservation land – and in particular, wilderness (see, for example Cloke & Perkins 1998; Coughlan 1997a; Coughlan & Kearsley 1996; Devlin 1993; Kearsley & Higham 1997). As noted by Cessford & Dingwall (1997, p 35):

Traditionally their [overseas tourists’] activities have been concentrated on sightseeing and short scenic walks at a few key sites along a distinct tourist circuit. However, in recent years the scope of tourist activities and variety of sites visited in New Zealand have broadened rapidly, and now encompass a wider range of conservation lands. Apart from raising concerns about the spread of environmental impacts, these changes present a threat to the quality of recreation experiences available both in wilderness areas and in other conservation lands.

Many of these concerns have also been voiced by members of outdoor recreation clubs and societies or conservationists. Key amongst the concerns is the belief that New Zealand’s unique wilderness values may be lost through increasing tourism pressure. For example:
Of particular concern is pressure from the tourist industry for more roads and sightseeing flights through a number of South Island national parks. Many of these proposed mechanical intrusions into formal or de facto wilderness areas.

(Molloy 1997, p. 14)

A number of commentators have discussed public frustration over moves to encourage further tourist use of New Zealand conservation land (see Coughlan 1997b; Kearsley & O’Neill 1994; PANZ 1997). In a recent wilderness publication, Molloy & Potton (2007) wrote:

Tourism on conservation land can generate substantial economic benefits to local communities, but the [New Zealand Tourism] Strategy hardly recognises that there may be on-site consequences of encouraging such burgeoning rates of international visitor growth… unfortunately the worldwide hallmark of commercial tourism is its inability to recognise when too much of a good thing is on the way to becoming a bad thing…

(p. 312-313)

And Cloke & Perkins (2002) noted:

These crowding related tensions and the accompanying processes of displacement are exacerbated when wealthy overseas tourists challenge existing back country culture and use expensive modes of transport (e.g. helicopters and jet boats) and professional guides to gain access to back country wilderness areas without the effort of walking in and ‘roughing it’ in the ways traditionally expected by New Zealand outdoor recreationists. There are signs of growing resistance to these developments.  

(p. 534)

In the November 2006 edition of the FMC Bulletin, David Round argued that the Department of Conservation was prioritising tourism use of conservation land at the expense of independent recreationists (Round 2006). He proposed that tourism is distinctly different from traditional, independent outdoor recreation37, and that park managers are currently failing to make this distinction. Similarly Bruce Mason38 suggested that the Department of Conservation was actively fostering tourism because of pressure from commercial interests and an increasing dependence on funding from concessions fees (B. Mason pers. comm., 29 May 2007). Metiria Turei (Spokesperson for the New Zealand Green Party) expressed the party’s fears about the commercialisation of conservation land through increasing tourism:

Where tourism and independent recreation are at odds, the economic clout of tourism may well win the upper hand… recreationists need to be alert and persuasive. Tourism has industrial weight and a financial incentive… We have much to lose if the conservation estate is subtly privatised.  

(Turei 2008)

In an article on adventure tourism in New Zealand, Cloke & Perkins (1998) summed up the complexities of this issue when they wrote:

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37 ‘Tourists’ were described as ‘pleasure seeking individuals using commercial products or services to have a predictable, packaged experience’, whereas ‘recreationists’ were ‘independent individuals seeking to recreate and refresh themselves.

38 Bruce Mason is a campaigner for independent recreation on public lands, who has been involved in the access debate since the mid 1970s.
Many more concessions have been let to commercial operators on the conservation estate. This has led to land use policy tensions between conservation and tourism which seem unlikely to abate in the near future. They are manifested on a day to day level as ongoing angry disputes between government agencies, intent on commercialising their activities and placing their management energies on services for tourists, and representatives of outdoor recreation groups who fear declining quality of service and resource access for their members. (p. 199)

Views such as these are frequently expressed on websites such as Recreation Access New Zealand (www.recreationaccess.org.nz) and the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand (www.fmc.org.nz) and in New Zealand outdoor recreation publications, but as yet, there have been surprisingly few studies which have examined people’s views on tourism activities in wilderness. In the following section, I will review the main findings from the small amount of research that was uncovered in this area.

3.4 Interpretations of commercial wilderness tourism

Although there is a significant amount of literature on both the positive and negative effects of protected area tourism (see, for example, Bramwell & Lane 2000; Brandis & Batini 1985; Brown, Turner, Hameed & Bateman 1997; Buckley & Pannell 1990; Miller & Malek 1996; O’ Loughlin 1988; Pigram & Jenkins 2006), there has been very little research into the (potentially negative) social effects of wilderness tourism – particularly in a New Zealand context (Pigram & Jenkins 2006). Of those studies that do mention the social impacts of tourism in wilderness, very few make more than a brief reference to the topic, and only one study was uncovered which specifically addressed the effects of tourism on the experience and values of wilderness.

Several wilderness perception studies have identified that commercial development and commercial tourism are seen by many as ‘unacceptable’ in wilderness settings – even for non-users (see Wilson 1979; Shultis 1999). Higham et al. (2000) analysed three wilderness perception studies in New Zealand, and concluded that commercial tourism was viewed as unacceptable in wilderness settings because it is contrary to the image of wilderness. Wilson (1979) questioned tramping club members and the New Zealand general public about their perceptions of wilderness. Both groups felt that any evidence of ‘overt commercialisation’ was definitely not acceptable in a wilderness setting, but there was no attempt made to define ‘overt commercialisation’. Freitag Ronaldson, Kalwa, Badenhorst, Erasmus, Venter & Nel (2003) suggested that increasing levels of commercial tourism in Kruger National Park, South

[39 In the context of outdoor recreation, social impacts can be defined as: ‘human effects on the physical and social conditions at a site that detract from the social values and recreation opportunities associated with the site’ (Cessford 1999).]
Africa are placing growing pressure on the core wilderness areas of the Park, and ‘shrinking the distribution of pure wilderness attributes’ (p. 47).

Kearsley (1982) carried out a survey of visitors to Fiordland National Park, New Zealand. He discovered that the majority of respondents did not see commercial tourism as a role of the national park, and that many were against any form of development which would ‘commercialise’ the Park. A study undertaken by Wynn (2003) examined the impacts of tourism on the wilderness values of the Zambezi River, Africa, and concluded that commercial tourism was one of the key factors that detracted from visitors’ experiences in the area. Commercial activities that were identified as being most inappropriate included advertising signs and commercial sales outlets.

Some studies have also provided evidence of conflict between private and commercial users of public land (Cessford 1987; Fisher 1982; Harris 1983). Although not specifically based in ‘wilderness’, these findings suggest that such conflicts may be likely to occur in other similar (and particularly in more remote) settings. Curtis (2003) found that many outdoor recreation groups believed that commercial tourism was ‘destroying’ public recreation opportunities on Crown land in British Columbia, Canada. Similarly, Buckley (2006) noted that: ‘in some cases, especially where sites are crowded, there is antagonism between those present for private recreation and those there for commercial tours or instruction’ (p. 15). In this paper, Buckley also cited a study by Jakus & Shaw (1997) which found that 13 per cent of climbers at a particular site wanted commercial climbing lessons prohibited. He also stated that there have also been conflicts between recreational surfers and commercial surf schools, and recreational boaties and commercial charter boats, but no further details of the nature of these events are provided.

Research has also indicated that tensions have developed between traditional users of natural areas and ‘new visitors’ or ‘foreign tourists’. An example of this is the conflict which occurred between local users of Femundsmarka National Park, Norway, and a group of German tourists in 1996 (see Vail 2000). This incident, and the social and political context which surrounded it, illustrated how cultural differences can lead to potentially serious ‘clashes’ between tourists and local users of protected natural areas. The root of the conflict between the two groups was believed to be social, and was caused by fundamental differences
in core cultural values about the meaning and use of the natural environment\textsuperscript{40}. The details of conflict theory (and a selection of studies which have adopted this theory) will be presented in Chapter Four. The conflicts described in Vail’s article may become more common in locations around the world where growth in nature based tourism has resulted in an increase in overseas visitors to places which were previously only used by ‘locals’\textsuperscript{41}.

Taking a more philosophical approach to the issue of tourism in wilderness, some authors have drawn attention to the fact that commercial activities conflict with the ethos underpinning wilderness (see, for example Cessford & Thompson 2002; Watson 2001). They suggest that recreationists may reject tourism in wilderness on purely philosophical grounds - because of a belief that any commercial activity runs counter to many of the values embodied in wilderness such as challenge, danger, freedom, escapism, lack of human influence and a chance to use one’s own skills and abilities. Dustin \textit{et al.} (1987) argued that the values underlying tourism are completely different to those which underpin free and independent recreation. In their view, the goal of outdoor recreation on public conservation land is to promote human growth and development, whereas the goal of tourism is simply to make a profit. They also point out that in some cases (such as rafting on the Colorado River) commercial ‘outfitters’ have priority over independent rafters (75 per cent of permits versus 25 per cent for independent visitors), which is causing animosity towards the companies and the rafting clients themselves. Parker & Avant (2000) found that ‘self-interest or commercial interest’ sometimes took precedence over wilderness values amongst commercial operators in the Sierra Nevada region of the United States. This was seen as antithetical to, and incompatible with, independent wilderness recreation\textsuperscript{42}.

Another objection to tourism on conservation land is the idea that commercial operators are taking advantage of public lands and facilities:

\begin{quote}
In countries such as Australia, tourism interests are currently pursuing political approaches that would allow them to reap most of the potential profits available from public demand to visit protected areas, whilst only paying a small fraction of the management costs and none of the capital costs.
\end{quote}

(Buckley 2003, p. 4)

\textsuperscript{40} The issues form a sub-set of a much broader literature related to crowding, conflict and social impacts in protected natural areas. See Vaske, Needham & Cline (2007) for a review and critique of existing recreation conflict research.

\textsuperscript{41} I use the term ‘locals’ to describe people who live in the vicinity of the protected natural area in question, or (particularly in the case of New Zealand), citizens of that particular country who visit the area frequently and consequently feel a sense of ownership and attachment towards it.

\textsuperscript{42} It is important to note that situations also exist where commercial and independent users share the same recreational resource and there is little or no conflict between the two groups. This appears to be the case on the Milford Track in New Zealand. Findings from a study examining this issue will be published in a forthcoming Department of Conservation report.
A few studies have examined the issue of tourism in wilderness from a planning or management perspective. This kind of research has typically been undertaken by park management agencies, and has focused on the benefits of tourism (of which there are many, but they will not be discussed here), and ways in which managers can deal with increasing pressure from tourism operators in wilderness areas. Of those studies that were found to be relevant, Jebson (1983) discovered (through interviewing commercial operators and land managers) that ‘conflicts between some commercial and private recreationists were of considerable significance’ (p. 64). The noise factor associated with many types of commercial recreation activities (such as helicopters, aeroplanes and jet boats) was believed to have a detrimental impact upon independent recreationists wishing to enjoy a ‘wilderness experience’. Commercial use of public facilities (such as tracks and huts) was also identified as a source of conflict between commercial and independent users. Some managers felt that the private sector use of these facilities at times may be to the detriment of the general public - for example, if overcrowding becomes a problem. The study concluded that ‘in recreative activities requiring facilities such as huts, tracks and wharves, increasing visitor use is resulting in growing conflict between the private and commercial recreational sectors’ (p. 114).

Other management research has emphasised the need for proactive and prescriptive management plans and strategies, and the need for managers to assess the impacts of tourism activities on the social and physical environment before allowing them to go ahead. For example Gonzales & Otero (2002) explored ways in which managers could develop appropriate strategies for dealing with increasing numbers of ‘new’ or alternative forms of tourism in national parks in the Argentinean-Chilean Lakes corridor. They noted that the nature of tourism is changing rapidly, placing increasing pressure on protected natural areas. They also proposed that existing wilderness policy and legislation was not sufficiently detailed to be able to effectively manage these new forms of tourism and argued that more research was required into the impacts of these ‘new’ forms of wilderness tourism on the social and physical environment in order to enable managers to make informed decisions. This view is widely supported by academics and managers in the field of wilderness research (see for example Cessford & Thompson 2002; Cole 2004; Manning 2003; Patterson, Watson, Williams & Roggenbuck 1998; Watson 2000).
3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the development of tourism (and wilderness tourism) in New Zealand. It has shown that the tourism industry has grown from small beginnings to a multi-million dollar industry, which is based largely on the country’s extensive protected areas network and outstanding wilderness landscapes. This growth can be partly attributed to a worldwide trend towards ‘green tourism’, and improvements in technology and transport, but is also the result of New Zealand specific factors, including the existence of an extensive protected area network and strong outdoor recreation culture, and the active and aggressive role of the New Zealand government in promoting the wilderness environment overseas.

Tourism (and in particular, international tourism) has become a hugely successful industry in New Zealand, now representing over 18 per cent of the country’s total export earnings, and providing (direct or indirect) employment for almost one in ten New Zealanders (Ministry of Tourism 2009b). Although heralded by many as a very welcome addition to the nation’s economy, tourism has not, however, been so warmly received by everyone (in particular, conservation advocates and outdoor recreation organisations) and a number of groups and individuals have expressed concern over the potential social and ecological impacts of rapid tourism growth. Concerns about increasing tourism were voiced in New Zealand as early as the 1890s, and have resurfaced at regular intervals over the years since then. The debate came to prominence in the early 1990s when the New Zealand Tourism Board made their growth targets public. Since then, a number of articles have been published in the popular press and outdoor recreation websites and bulletins, expressing anger and frustration at the rapid growth of tourism and its effects on traditional users of conservation land. Contemporary concerns relate primarily to the impacts of increasing international tourism on independent recreational use of conservation land – and in particular, wilderness. At times, these concerns have manifested themselves in the public arena as resentment towards overseas visitors.

It is surprising that, despite the continued and impassioned concerns being expressed about this topic (albeit, from a relatively small group of vocal outdoor recreationists), there has been very little academic research into the potential conflict (and implications of this conflict) between frequent New Zealand visitors to conservation land, and international tourists who only visit the country for a short time. The minimal research that does exist on this topic indicates that both users and non-users of wilderness often view tourism as incompatible with wilderness, and that conflict is a likely outcome of a situation where traditional users of an outdoor recreation resource are expected to share it with ‘newcomers’. The research also
implies that the situation is likely to be more serious if wilderness or cultural values are at stake. Such evidence suggests that very careful planning is required in wilderness environments when either new users are introduced to the area, or when tourism activities are proposed. This topic is one of the major themes of discussion in this thesis. I return to it in a theoretical light in Chapter Four, and again in terms of the study findings in Chapter Nine. These ideas will also be central to the final discussion in Chapter Eleven.

The following chapter continues with a review of existing literature which has examined the concept of wilderness and the wilderness experience. This includes research into wilderness meanings and values, and potential threats to these values.
Chapter 4

Theorising recreational use of wilderness

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature on the wilderness concept. This is a difficult task because of the complexity of the topic and the fact that it has been approached from such a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Wilderness, for example, has been studied from a psychological, a sociological, a tourism, a managerial, an economic, a geographical, a biological, a cultural and from an outdoor recreation perspective. Adding to this complexity is the fact that wilderness can also be conceptualised in a variety of ways – for example as a form of outdoor recreation, a particular type of tourism (‘green’ tourism), an educational experience, and an expression of national identity. While information on wilderness is available across a range of sources – including a variety of literature (books, poetry, magazines), art and the popular media – here I focus on academic research which has examined the concept. In addition, despite the wealth of ecological research which has been carried out in wilderness settings, I only review social wilderness studies (i.e. those which look at human use of, and impacts in, wilderness) because of the social nature of my research objectives. The literature I review is therefore selective rather than exhaustive. The overall aim of the chapter is to give the reader a broad meta-theoretical overview of research in the wilderness field, and to place this study in the context of what has been written before.

This chapter is split into two main sections. Part one reports some of the key cognitive behavioural wilderness studies which characterised the early research in this field. The section finishes with a summary of the major critiques of this theoretical approach to wilderness. Part two then introduces the socio-cultural approach to wilderness (the approach adopted for the current study). The key features of, and findings from, this area of research are presented, and the advantages of adopting such an approach are discussed. The chapter concludes by proposing several reasons why the uptake of this approach has been relatively slow within the field of wilderness management.

4.1.1 Research overview

The field of wilderness research is relatively new, but it has rapidly grown in size and significance over the past few decades (Manning 1999). The impetus for the earliest wilderness studies arose out of concerns over the growing recreational use of protected natural
areas in the late 1960s and early 1970s (ibid.)\(^{43}\). The evolution of this early research has been well documented in the literature (for example, see Krump 2000; Manning 1999; Manning & Lime 2000). Initially, there was a clear dichotomy between environmental science concerns (for example ecological impacts) and social science concerns (for example crowding and conflict) in wilderness (Manning 1999). Ecological concerns predominated at first, and there is an extensive literature documenting the relationship between visitor use and environmental conditions (see, for example, Busher 1979; Calais & Kirkpatrick 1986; Cole 1981; Cole, Petersen & Lucas 1987; Duffield & Walker 1984; Hammitt & Cole 1998). In the late 1960s, however, social problems began to surpass traditional concerns for ecological impacts, and research into visitor use and user characteristics became an important part of the wilderness agenda (Cole 1996; Roggenbuck & Lucas 1987).

The research approach and methods used to study wilderness have also changed considerably since the first studies were undertaken. In broad terms, there has been a move away from predominantly survey based research, undertaken from a cognitive/behavioural perspective, towards a more interdisciplinary approach, adopting a socio-cultural/ social-geographical perspective, and using a variety of qualitative methods. Some of the reasons for these methodological and theoretical developments will be discussed in section 4.3, but before this, I will present some of the key findings from the earlier behavioural wilderness research. This is important because these studies have made significant contributions to the current understanding of wilderness, and have provided the foundation for the contemporary wilderness research programmes.

### 4.2 Cognitive behavioural psychological approaches to wilderness

Early research on the social dimensions of wilderness was very descriptive, and tended to adopt a behavioural or psychological meta-theoretical approach. This approach conceptualised the wilderness experience as an individualistic, cognitive process, whereby wilderness participants were believed to be motivated by specific psychological factors (such as the desire to be alone or to challenge oneself) and evaluated their satisfaction with the trip by the extent to which their individual goals had been realised. Studies of this kind utilised survey methods to gather information on use levels and user characteristics such as demography, and socio-economic status, motives, expectations and benefits of the experience (Borrie & Birzell 2001). Satisfaction scales were frequently employed to measure the quality of the visitor experience. One of the main objectives of this work was to aid managers in

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\(^{43}\) This period was termed the ‘back country boom’ in New Zealand (Mason 1974).
understanding why people chose to visit wilderness (their goals or motives) and how satisfied they were with the overall experience (what benefits they gained from it). As a result, much of this research was undertaken by, or at the request of, park management agencies. (For examples of such studies, refer to: Brown & Haas 1980; Feingold 1979; Kaplan 1974; Rossman & Ulehla 1977; Scott 1974; Shafer & Mietz 1969; Thomas 1977). Some of the main motives and benefits identified in these studies are outlined in the following section.

4.2.1 Wilderness motives
Research aimed at exploring wilderness motives typically defined the experience in terms of a package of specific psychological outcomes which are realised through recreation (Crandall 1980; Driver & Tocher 1970; Manfredo, Driver & Brown 1983) and involved asking visitors to state their ‘main reasons’ or ‘goals’ for visiting a wilderness area - often from a selection of pre-determined responses. Findings from these studies indicated that individuals are motivated to visit wilderness by a number of key factors (such as: to escape, to experience solitude, to challenge themselves and to experience nature/the natural environment) but that the relative importance of each of these factors varied from person to person and between locations (Kaplan & Talbot 1983).

One of the most frequently cited motives for visiting wilderness was the desire to ‘get away’, or to ‘escape’ from every-day life – this included escaping from tangible features such as the built environment and evidence of civilisation, and intangible features such as family stress and work pressures (see, for example Driver et al. 1987; Rossman & Ulehla, 1977). Wilderness was seen as a ‘refuge’ from the everyday world and from human activity; a place where individuals could escape momentarily from the pressures of urban life (Wohlwill 1983). Wilderness was commonly referred to as a ‘sacred’ place, where visitors could be free of the constraints of modern society to ‘explore their reflexive and reflective selves’ (Tresidder 1999, p. 139). Visiting these places was thus believed to provide people with a release from the pressures of everyday life: ‘Wilderness is a necessity for the protection of mental health’ (Dubos 1972, cited in Higham 1996, p. 22). Some authors (for example Meeker 1984) have criticised this notion of wilderness as an escape; claiming that this simply serves to reinforce dominant ideologies of wilderness as a white European male phenomenon in which humans are separate from nature.

44 For reviews of motivational wilderness research, see Heimstra & Mcfarling 1974; Iso-Ahola 1980 & Ittleson, Proshanksy, Rivlin & Winkel 1974.
Remoteness and solitude were found to be important components of the notion of ‘escape’ in the motivational research programme. Both terms are relatively well-accepted elements of wilderness, and are enshrined in most wilderness policy and legislation. Remoteness can be understood as a subjective feeling (i.e. the perception of being far from civilisation or other people) or as an objective setting quality (actually being physically distant from civilisation) (Watson et al. 2002). The feeling of remoteness can enhance a wilderness visit because it creates a sense of separation from everyday life, and promotes the feeling that help is a long way away. The concept of solitude is often used as a way of describing recreationists’ desire to be away from others, away from crowded settings, and to spend time alone in wilderness. Solitude can be defined as ‘the state of being alone’ (Oxford English Dictionary 2006). However, the literature suggests that wilderness solitude is a much more complex psychological concept (Hammitt 1994; Stewart & Cole 1997) – it is believed to be more about being ‘alone together’, experiencing intimacy within social groups, and feeling free from the observations and obligations of society (Hammitt & Madden 1989).

The broader notion of privacy has also been the subject of numerous wilderness studies. Privacy has been put forward as a more apt description of the psychological state of solitude sought by wilderness users (Hammitt, Backmann & Davies 2001). The concept of privacy comprises four elements: solitude (the state of complete isolation from the observation of others); intimacy (the state of seeking to achieve a maximal personal relationship between or among the members of a small group); anonymity (the state of seeking and achieving freedom from identification and surveillance in a public setting), and reserve (the state of not revealing certain aspects of oneself) (Westin 1967). Hammitt & Madden (1989) defined wilderness privacy as: ‘being in a natural, remote environment that offers a sense of tranquillity and peacefulness and that involves a freedom of choice in terms of both the information that users must process and the behaviour demanded of them by others’ (p. 293). A similar study undertaken by Priest & Bugg (1991) in Australia supported these findings. Other recent research has assessed the importance of these various dimensions of privacy for wilderness users (see Hammitt 1982; Hammitt et al. 2001), the main finding being that nature-based solitude and privacy are extremely important and distinguishing characteristics of wilderness.

Being part of the natural environment was also found to be a primary motivator for visiting wilderness, and is still frequently cited as one of the main factors influencing visitor satisfaction (see Brown & Haas 1980; Rossman & Ulehla 1977; Shafer & Mietz 1969; Watson et al. 2002). In a study of wilderness experiences in Rocky Mountain National Park, S. Schuster, Johnson & Taylor (2004) discovered that being surrounded by natural settings
and scenic beauty was the most important component of visitors’ experiences. The Park was seen as a place where visitors could experience nature uninterrupted; where they could observe and hear wildlife, respect the forces of nature, see spectacular landscapes and appreciate the complexity of the ecosystem.

These findings are often associated with the theoretical concept, ‘biophilia’, which has been used to help explain people’s attachment to nature and wilderness environments. The term was coined by Kellert & Wilson (1993), who defined biophilia as ‘the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms’ (p. 31). The authors suggested that the human desire to connect with nature stems from an innate knowledge that nature enables people to develop their intellectual and spiritual capacities; to bond emotionally with one another and the environment, to appreciate natural beauty, to express creativity, and to understand their place in the world. In other words, the biophilia theory asserts that people are drawn to natural environments because of a genetic predisposition which tells them that nature is ‘good for us’. This theory has, however, been criticised in recent times for its reductionist nature and its failure to recognise the socially constructed nature of human relationships with the natural world (see, for example, Franklin 2002). Approaches to wilderness that have arisen in response to criticisms such as these are discussed in section 4.3.

The challenges associated with the wilderness environment, and the desire for physical exertion are also frequently mentioned as reasons for visiting wilderness in the behavioural literature. Wilderness trips are by nature physically demanding, and most take place in mountainous and densely forested areas where the terrain is difficult to navigate (Kellert 1998). Visitors are often required to use their personal skills to face and overcome these environments, and this has typically been found to foster physical fitness, endurance, stamina, strength and coordination (ibid.). The theory of ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihayli 1990), which will be discussed in the next section, has been used to explain the importance of challenge to wilderness users. Kaplan & Talbot (1983) have, however, suggested that other elements of the experience may be of greater significance than challenge for many people.

Place attachment has been proposed as an important reason for why people visit wilderness. The concept has been studied by a number of authors whose work is underpinned by cognitive behaviouralism (see, for example, Grob 1995; Hammit & Rutlin 1997; Mitchell, Force, Carol & McLaughlin 1993; Moore & Graefe 1994; Sharpe & Ewert 2000) and it is believed to have significant implications for the wilderness experience and wilderness management (Schroeder 2002; Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck & Watson 1992; Walker,
Hull & Roggenbuck 1996). Place attachment has been characterised in the literature as an individual’s relationships with his or her surroundings (Bricker & Kerstetter 2000). At its simplest, ‘place’ can be defined as space that has been given meaning (Tuan 1977), and ‘attachment’ in this context refers to an affective relationship developed between people and the landscape which produces a state of psychological well-being (Sharpe & Ewert 2000). Place attachment is believed to be important in wilderness because the experiences that people have in such settings can be a significant part of their lives, and can help to develop personal identity (Schroeder 2002), but also because such attachments can increase the potential for conflict between different types of users of a particular wilderness resource - for example if they feel strongly about the area and value it for different reasons.

Behavioural approaches to place attachment have, however, been criticised by researchers working in disciplinary areas such as sociology, anthropology and social and cultural geography. Such critiques have encouraged new theoretical developments, and have led to new ways of conceptualising place. These developments are discussed in section 4.4.1.

4.2.2 Wilderness benefits

In conjunction with the motivational research programme, much research attention has also been paid to the socio-psychological development that individuals go through as a result of their wilderness experience (Ewert & McAvoy 2000; White & Hendee 2000). This research has typically been undertaken from a psychological perspective, and has been published in journals such as ‘Environmental Psychology’, ‘Environment and Behaviour’ and the ‘Therapeutic Recreation Journal’. Most of these studies have been based on the assumption that wilderness experiences cause positive changes in individuals, and thus seek to prove that this is the case (Kaplan & Talbot 1983). Again, these studies have largely relied upon the analysis of survey or questionnaire data, where respondents are asked to select from a variety of pre-determined responses to indicate what they have gained or achieved from the experience. As a result, the findings do not provide particularly detailed information about wilderness experiences. In addition, the reliability and validity of a number of these studies has been questioned. Gibson (1979), for example, reviewed twenty one pieces of research looking at wilderness benefits, and concluded that: ‘all of these studies suffer from minor to serious methodological shortcomings’ (p. 24), which included inappropriate choices of methods or sample sizes of an insufficient size. Nonetheless, some of the findings from the

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45 Many of the benefits associated with wilderness recreation are not exclusive to wilderness, and are common to other forms of outdoor recreation.

46 For reviews of early research in this area, refer to Gibson 1979; Kahoe 1979; Turner 1976.
wilderness benefits research have been of considerable use in the field of wilderness
management and outdoor leadership programmes. A brief summary of these benefits is
provided next.

The benefits of wilderness are believed to include increased self-esteem, self-confidence,
optimism, independence, autonomy, greater awareness of the ‘self’, moral and spiritual
development, including enhanced calm and peace of mind, feelings of harmony, spiritual
awareness and awe (Brayley & Fox 1998; Heintzman 1999; Kellert 1998; Stringer &
that opportunities to express and affirm self-identity through wilderness can facilitate human
growth and development, and can provide people with a sense of identity. A similar study of
wilderness participants in outdoor leadership programmes in the USA found that the majority
of respondents reported increased personal autonomy (including self-reliance, independence,
maturity and confidence), improved personal development skills such as contentment, self-
esteeem, self-respect and peace of mind (Kellert, 1998).

Exactly how and why wilderness can have such profound psychological effects is not fully
understood, but several authors (working primarily in the discipline of psychology) have
proposed conceptual frameworks for understanding the dynamics of these effects (see, for
example, Csikszentmihayli 1990; Iso-Ahola 1986; Paulhus 1983; Scherl 1989; Shin 1999).
The theory of ‘flow’ or ‘peak experience’ (Csikszentmihayli 1990) has been used extensively
to understand intense leisure experiences such as wilderness visits. Flow is defined as an
‘optimal interaction in leisure when the appropriate balance is struck between motivation,
competence and the environment’ (Rojek 2005, p. 35). Flow occurs when an individual is
able to push his or herself and use his/her skills successfully to overcome a challenging
situation (ibid.). If the individual’s abilities are less than the challenge, the result may be
boredom or frustration, rather than a state of flow. Conversely, if the task or challenge is
beyond the ability of the individual, then he/she may become scared or anxious.

An important dimension of ‘flow’ is the notion that participants may become so entirely
absorbed in the activity and the surroundings, that they lose sense of time and self-
consciousness (Rojek 2005). This is often evident in accounts of wilderness experiences,
where individuals report a sense of ‘timelessness’ and ‘oneness’ with the surrounding
environment (Borrie & Roggenbuck 1995). Timelessness is a feeling which is induced by the
lack of external controls on people’s behaviour in wilderness (ibid.). People may feel a natural
affinity with the rhythms of nature during their wilderness experience – for example rising at
dawn and sleeping when darkness falls, rather than according to the clock. Oneness describes the sense of comfort, harmony and belonging to the natural environment that wilderness visitors often develop as they become more accustomed to their surroundings (ibid.).

Self actualisation is a psychological concept that has been used to understand the value of wilderness to users (see Driver et al. 1987; Ewert 1986; Roggenbuck 1984; Shin 1993). It is a positive concept which refers to the desire for self fulfilment, and can be defined as ‘the process within a human being by which his or her potential is brought to realisation’ (Shin 1999, p. 133). The literature suggests that wilderness visits increase an individual’s ability to self-actualise, and that wilderness users have higher self-actualisation levels than non-users (Scott 1974; Shin 1999; Vogel 1979; Young & Crandall 1984). Reasons that have been suggested for this include an absence of human interference in wilderness, low levels of noise and external disturbances, and time to think and reflect (Shin 1993).

Wilderness benefits research has also indicated that wilderness visitors often achieve spiritual benefits from their experiences (Fredrickson 1998; Heintzman, 2002; Kaplan & Talbot 1983; Schroeder 1992). Spiritual experiences in wilderness can be defined as moments of intense spiritual awareness and fulfilment, which are often triggered by aspects of the natural environment (Straker 2005). Accounts of wilderness experiences frequently contain descriptions of powerful feelings, emotions and memories (such as awe, fear, inspiration and pleasure), and there is a general belief that these are evoked through encounters with the non-human world. Cronon (1995) describes these encounters with nature as being in the presence of something irreducibly non-human, something profoundly ‘other’ than yourself, which evokes a sense of spirituality, or connection with a higher power. Because of its vastness and absence of human influence, wilderness is viewed as a place where individuals can feel close to a higher power, and can engage in spiritual expression (Heintzman 2003). Other spiritual concepts that have been linked to wilderness experiences include feelings of humility and insignificance which are evoked by the sheer size and scale of the natural environments (Borrie & Roggenbuck 1995).

Effectively coping and adjusting to wilderness settings requires various skills and outdoor knowledge, and consequently, an improvement in such abilities is often documented as a positive outcome of a wilderness trip (Kellert 1998). These skills are extremely diverse, and can include physical skills (such as hiking and climbing), technical skills (such as equipment and gear usage), general outdoor skills (such as map reading, route finding, choosing suitable camp spots and preparing meals), mental skills and attributes (such as learning to deal with
unpredictable or difficult situations) and communication and relationship-building skills (Dawson, Newman & Watson 1998). Acquiring these skills, especially the ability to deal with new and challenging situations can enhance wilderness users’ critical thinking and problem solving capacities, and learning about the natural environment (which often forms a part of a wilderness experience) can foster cognitive and intellectual development (ibid.).

A number of studies report that intimate relationships are often formed during wilderness visits (see, for example, Ewert & McAvoy 2000; Fredrickson 1998; Pohl, Borrie & Patterson 2000). Spending intense (and often difficult or challenging) times with others is seen as a successful way to develop strong and lasting relationships. When wilderness activities are undertaken with others, the experience can foster various interpersonal abilities such as enhanced cooperation, tolerance, compassion, intimacy and friendship (Kellert 1998). Wilderness trips can be a valuable occasion for people to spend time with friends and family, away from the distractions of others. They are used as ways to build trust, understanding, communication skills, and general cohesion within groups of people (Ewert & McAvoy 2000). This may seem like a contradiction in terms, given that solitude is frequently cited as a fundamental characteristic of wilderness – particularly in North American studies. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, research suggests that solitude in wilderness does not necessarily mean being completely alone.

4.2.3 Factors affecting the wilderness experience
A separate, but complementary body of research on wilderness (also within the behavioural/psychological research domain) has focused on how to protect and preserve wilderness values by identifying factors that can detrimentally affect it. This has typically involved asking recreationists to state things with which they were dissatisfied during their visit, or to indicate things that detracted from their overall enjoyment. A great deal of attention has been paid to the interactions that arise between different types of wilderness users, and between wilderness users and the surrounding environment. Findings from these studies have demonstrated that wilderness is a fragile resource, and that people’s experiences can be detrimentally affected by a range of factors, including: the presence of visitors other than those in their own group, evidence of human impact, non-natural noise, technology and commercialisation (see, for example, Borrie 1998; Crothers 1987; Fidell, Silvati, Tabachnick, Howe & Pearsons 1992; Gabites 1996; Schuster et al. 2004; Watson 2000). These factors are the focus of this section.
The presence of others has been found to detract from wilderness, primarily because it can compromise feelings of remoteness, solitude and isolation. The group size, group type (i.e. nationality, age, activity undertaken) and behaviour of other visitors has also been found to have a significant influence on whether encounters with others are perceived in a negative way. Research indicates that wilderness users prefer to encounter small groups (Stankey 1973) and that they dislike encountering visitors using modes of travel different from their own (Lucas 1964a). It also suggests that independent (or non-commercial) wilderness visitors often dislike encountering commercially guided groups (Cessford 1987; Fisher 1982; Harris 1983 and Wray, Harbrow & Kazmierow 2005) and that visitors may object to the use of certain technological equipment in wilderness (such as GPS units and cell phones) (Borrie 1998).

As noted in section 4.2.1, frequent users of a particular area of conservation land can develop deep attachments to it, and are likely to have specific ideas about what is (or is not) appropriate in that setting. If other visitors are believed to be acting in a way which undermines these behavioural norms, then this can also have a major impact on wilderness values. Specific forms of behaviour that have been found to be objectionable to wilderness users include: making noise, loud behaviour, littering, failure to respect the environmental care code and not complying with management regulations (Cole et al. 1987; Lynn & Brown 2003; Patterson & Hammitt 1990; Peterson & Lime 1979; West 1982). Several studies have indicated that the behaviour of other visitors is more objectionable when recreationists perceive themselves to be different to the other users (see, for example, Adelman, Heberlein & Bonnickson 1982; Basman, Manfredo, Barro, Vaske & Watson 1996; Jackson & Wong 1982; Knopp & Tyger 1973; Lee 1972; Watson, Roggenbuck & Williams 1991). In support of this theory, Watson et al. (2002) found that visitors to the Gates of the Arctic National Park were most satisfied when they encountered visitors who shared similar values to themselves, or who were undertaking similar activities. Similarly, Cheek & Burch (1976) suggested that perceptions of alikeness are extremely important in wilderness settings because of the absence of defined behavioural norms47 and social controls on visitor behaviour, which serves to heighten people’s awareness of others’ behaviour. A potential outcome of an encounter with others in wilderness is ‘recreational conflict’. This is a theoretical concept which has been utilised a great deal in outdoor recreation research, and it will be discussed in section 4.2.4.

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47 This is not to suggest that behavioural norms do not exist in wilderness settings, more that they are not formalised like they would be in a more popular or urban setting. Indeed, as will be seen in chapters seven to ten, there are a number of well established (albeit unwritten) behavioural rules for appropriate conduct in wilderness.
As noted in section 4.2.1, wilderness is highly valued for its undeveloped and unmodified environment and its absence of human impact (Schuster, Tarrant & Watson 2005). People appreciate wilderness because it offers a chance to escape from signs of civilisation such as lights, sounds, other visitors, and man-made structures (such as huts, buildings, steps, signs and bridges) (Shultis 1999). As such, any evidence of human impact in wilderness has the potential to change its meaning for visitors. Examples of such impacts include litter, vegetation damage, multi-tracking, fire rings, noise and wildlife disturbance (Cole 1996; Martin, McCool & Lucas 1989). Research suggests that for the most ‘pure’ wilderness users, any evidence of physical development by humans changes their experience because it reduces feelings of remoteness and isolation and ‘brings them back to civilisation’ (Schuster et al. 2004). It can also reduce the sense of satisfaction felt at being alone in nature, and can diminish the sense of challenge and achievement felt when nature is ‘overcome’ through one’s own skills and abilities.

One of the defining (and most valued) features of wilderness areas has been found to be ‘natural quiet’ (DOC 1996). It can be defined as the natural ambient conditions or sounds of nature (ibid.), and can range from complete silence to thunder and lightning. It includes all sounds made by animals and plants. In contrast, non-natural noise can be defined as any sounds generated by humans – for example, people’s voices, movement, use of equipment, and motorised transport. Research indicates that when people visit wilderness areas, they not only seek a change of scenery, but also a refreshing auditory experience, with minimal sounds of civilisation (Tal 2004). In a study of wilderness visitors to the Rocky Mountain National Park, Schuster et al. (2004) found that most respondents described non-natural noise as being ‘out of place’ and ‘acting as an intrusion by bringing them back to civilisation’ (p. 45). The notion of ‘natural quiet’ has thus been a prominent objective for worldwide wilderness policy and legislation since the 1970s (ibid.).

The key non-natural noise effect identified in the wilderness literature is that generated by motorised transport48. Motorised transport is often cited as an ‘unacceptable’ activity in a wilderness setting because it goes against the wilderness ideals of challenge and self-sufficiency, and because the noise that it generates can disrupt or detract from many of the goals that people seek to achieve in wilderness. The noise of another person or a motorised vehicle can, for example, serve to remind people that they are not alone in wilderness, or that they are closer to civilisation than they thought. This realisation can erode the positive

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48 Predominantly aircraft, but also other forms of transport such as power craft, jet boats and motor vehicles.
feelings of remoteness, solitude and isolation, and can totally change the overall experience (Booth, Jones & Devlin 1997).

There has been a significant amount of research in the past few decades into the effects of aircraft noise on the wilderness experience (for example see Booth et al. 1997; Fidell et al. 1992; Tal 2004; United States National Park Service [USNPS] 2004). Findings have indicated that natural quiet is likely to be much more important in wilderness than in other recreational settings because any non-natural noise represents undesirable sounds of civilisation and may therefore be evaluated negatively even at low levels (USNPS 1994). Studies have also found that wilderness users are more vulnerable to noise intrusions - partly because much lower levels of ambient noise exist in natural settings, but also because people who have made a greater physical effort to reach their destination are likely to be more sensitive to aircraft sounds (Fidell et al. 1992).

Aircraft landings in, or near, wilderness areas also have the potential to create lasting impacts on wilderness values by bringing more people into remote areas. Any increase in visitor numbers is likely to negate or compromise many of the traditional values associated with wilderness. The likelihood of encountering other people will be increased; perceptions of solitude and remoteness are likely to decrease; the element of challenge and risk may be reduced; and the sense of achievement at successfully travelling through wilderness could be destroyed through an encounter with someone who arrived by aircraft. In addition, there is a risk that aircraft access would encourage more unskilled people to venture into areas where they may not possess the necessary skills or knowledge to survive if they become stranded.

A number of authors have discussed the potential impacts of technology on wilderness (see Borrie 1998; Bryan 2000; Ewert & Shultis 1999; Hull 2000; Peterson & Harmon 1993; Shultis 2000; Weil & Rosen 1997). There is a general acknowledgement that technology has facilitated wilderness use, and in doing so, has increased public support for wilderness protection. Despite this, a variety of concerns have been voiced about its potential to change the very meaning of wilderness. According to Shultis (2001), there are four major areas of concern: the accelerating rate of technological innovations; the increasing amount and level of social and environmental impacts related to the use of new technologies; the impacts of technology on people’s recreation experiences, and the potential of technology to alter the whole concept of wilderness. Technological advancements are creating a world in which there are fewer knowledge barriers and fewer barriers to travel – where people from all over the world can visit previously inaccessible wilderness areas (Eagles et al. 2002). These people
may not have the same knowledge or experience as existing visitors and so may require additional infrastructure or facilities to facilitate their experience. If managers decide to cater for these ‘new’ types of visitors, the implications for traditional wilderness meanings and recreational use patterns can be significant (Bryan 2000).

Technology such as motorised transport, lightweight clothing and equipment, and navigation equipment can enable people to travel further, faster and more efficiently in wilderness. Recreationists now have access to highly advanced digital information and communication systems which enable them to find detailed information about wilderness areas, and to locate themselves precisely within a wilderness area, or to call for help if they find themselves in a difficult situation (Borrie 1998). Although some people argue that this is beneficial because it allows more people to experience wilderness, others believe that it is drastically altering traditional wilderness meanings. Schuster et al. (2004) noted, for example, that cell phone usage in wilderness areas has the potential to have a ‘profoundly negative effect on visitors’ wilderness experiences’ (p. 46). Many people believe that technology runs counter to the philosophy of wilderness; encouraging human domination of the environment, rather than surrendering to the forces of nature. Technology thus has the potential to destroy the sense of discovery, freedom and mystery that forms the essence of ‘traditional’ wilderness for many visitors.

An added complexity is the fact that recreationists, wilderness managers and the general public often display conflicting attitudes towards the use of technology in wilderness (Shultis 2001). While there are clearly advocates for technology in wilderness (for example pro-aircraft groups and companies marketing new clothing and equipment), there are also many people who wish to restrict the use of motorised transport and communication technologies in wilderness. Conflicting views on the issue are also evident within particular user groups (for example some New Zealand hunters want aircraft access to wilderness, while others would prefer it to be restricted in order to maintain the ‘traditional’ wilderness hunting experience). The issue has become a controversial, divisive issue amongst wilderness managers and recreationists alike.

4.2.4 **Substantive theoretical approaches to understanding wilderness impacts**

Using cognitive behavourialism as a meta-theory, various substantive theories have been developed to help understand the effects that factors such as those outlined in the previous
section can have on individuals’ wilderness experiences. The three concepts that have received the most academic attention are ‘conflict’, ‘crowding’ and ‘displacement’.

**Conflict**

Recreational conflict is commonly agreed to be one of the main impacts of increased visitor use of wilderness. It can be defined as ‘a negative experience, occurring when competition for shared resources prevents expected benefits of participation from accruing to an individual or a group’ (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey 1991, p. 309). Conflict is a specific type of user dissatisfaction which occurs when people feel that their recreational experience is compromised by other users. It is of particular concern for outdoor wilderness managers because it can lead to dissatisfaction amongst users of the resource, and consequently a decline in the quality of the recreational experience (see for example, Blahna, Smith & Anderson 1995; Hammitt & Schneider 2000; Knopp & Tyger 1973; Lynch, Wilkinson, Melling, Hamilton, MacReady & Feary 2004; Mann & Absher 2008; Stankey 1973). It can also prompt recreationists to employ a variety of coping mechanisms such as displacement (in time or space) or substitution – changing the type of activity undertaken. This in turn can create pressure on other locations, and can cause further changes to the nature of the recreational experience. Research has shown that conflict is increasing between participants in outdoor recreation activities, and that it is likely to occur in areas where there are high levels of use and/or a variety of different activities competing for the same resource (Manning 1999). Conflicts have also developed between traditional activities (such as tramping), and ‘new’ activities like mountain biking and snowmobiling. Studies that have explored this topic area have emphasised the importance of symbolic values and philosophical beliefs about wilderness, and the ‘appropriateness’ of particular activities within it (see Blahna et al. 1995; Moore & McClaren 1991).

Attempts have also been made to understand the reasons for conflict from a theoretical perspective. The social psychological theory of attraction has been used to explain the discord between types of recreational users in particular areas (Adelman et al. 1982). Findings suggest that conflict occurs when recreationists perceive themselves as different to other users - this includes differences in appearance, behaviour, motivations for visiting and values towards the (conservation) resource or the activity. The most commonly applied model, and the most substantial theoretical basis for understanding recreational conflict, however, is Jacob &

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Schreyer’s (1980) theory of goal interference. The theory defines conflict as ‘goal interference attributed to another’s behaviour’. According to the theory, conflict is a negative experience which occurs when participants with incompatible goals come into contact. The theory suggests that conflict in outdoor recreation can be caused by four major factors: 1) activity style, 2) resource specificity, 3) mode of experience and 4) lifestyle tolerance. Most studies that have used this theory to explore conflict in outdoor recreation settings have been undertaken in North America, and have focused on one or two elements of the model, although a few studies have taken a more comprehensive approach and have attempted to measure all four factors (Gibbons & Ruddell 1995; Gramann & Burdge 1981; Jackson & Wong 1982; Vaske, Carothers, Donnelly & Baird 2000; Wang & Dawson, 2000). Examples of studies which have used the theory of goal interference to explore conflict in New Zealand recreation settings include Hawke (2000); Horn (1994) and Wray et al. (2005).

The original conflict theory has, however, been criticised for its simplistic nature, and for the mechanistic and individualistic cognitive behavioural model of human behaviour on which it is based (e.g. Kriesberg 1998). The potential of such approaches to uncover rich information about the socio-cultural and place-related roots of the conflicts may be limited. As a result, more expanded versions of the model have been suggested (see, for example, Blahna et al. 1995; Hammit 1989; Mann & Absher, 2008, Schuster et al., 2006a, 2006b; Reis & Higham 2009; Todd & Graefe 1989; Vittersø et al. 2004 ). Vaske et al. (2007) provide a review and critique of existing recreation conflict research.

Crowding

The term ‘crowding’ has been used in recreation research since the mid 1960s to describe the psychological effect of increasing use on users of recreation areas. It is a subjective, negative interpretation of visitor density which relates to the effects of increasing use of wilderness areas and is based on the notion that there is some level of visitor use beyond which the quality of the recreation experience diminishes. Wagar (1964) was one of the first academics to discuss the concept. He suggested that when too many people use the same area, some traditional wild-land values are lost. Crowding has since been shown to have a detrimental effect on many aspects of wilderness such as solitude, freedom, self reliance and exploration (Manning 1999). There is a substantial literature on crowding in wilderness (see Hammitt, McDonald & Noe 1984; Lucas 1964b; Shelby 1980; Tarrant, Cordell & Kibler 1997). This is largely because wilderness is perceived to be more vulnerable to impacts than high use

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"For a detailed explanation of the model and its various elements, refer to Jacob and Schreyer (1980).\"
settings, and also because most wilderness areas are required by law to provide opportunities for solitude (Manning 1999).

Early crowding research was based on the assumption that visitor satisfaction was inversely related to use levels. However, more recent studies have demonstrated that crowding is a much more complex, multi dimensional concept, which is related to visitor characteristics, motives and expectations and also to setting characteristics and the behaviour of other visitors. Key factors influencing the extent to which an individual feels crowded in a recreational setting include: sensitivity to increasing use levels; personal characteristics (such as motives, preferences, expectations, experience and attitudes); characteristics of others encountered (such as type and size of group, behaviour and perceptions of alikeness); the type of recreation area, and the activities being undertaken (Manning 1999).

**Displacement**

Visitor displacement is believed to be one of the most likely consequences of increased crowding and conflict in wilderness settings (Manning 1999). Displacement is a behavioural response that involves spatial or temporal changes in recreational use patterns (*ibid.*). Research suggests that, as use levels (and/or other associated impacts such as crowding and conflict) increase, some recreationists become dissatisfied and change their patterns of use to avoid these impacts – moving to other areas, or using traditional areas at different times (*ibid.*). The notion of displacement was discussed as early as 1971, when Clark, Hendee & Campbell (1971) described it as a process of ‘invasion and succession’. Displacement can involve shifts from one recreation site to another; *within* a recreation area, and from one time period to another (Anderson & Brown 1984).

Displacement is believed to occur as a result of ‘recreation succession’ – a process whereby a recreation site and the type of visitors that it attracts, changes over time as the area becomes more widely-known. Initially, visitors to an area tend to be few in number and highly experienced, and therefore have relatively little impact on the surrounding environment or the experience of other visitors. As awareness of the area increases, however, so too does visitor use, and the associated demand for facility development. Conflict over resources arises as the ‘new’ visitors have different expectations and motives from the existing users. The nature of the visitor experience begins to change to suit these new users, and the appeal of the area for the experienced visitors diminishes. The original users are likely to become fewer and fewer in number until eventually they are pushed out of the area altogether and displaced into a
more remote recreation site. This process can have serious implications for the visitor experience as well as the ecology of the site in question. This concern has been a major driver of wilderness research over the past four decades.

There is some evidence to indicate that displacement is occurring in New Zealand as visitors are pushed deeper into more remote areas in search of their ‘wilderness’ experience (see Kearsley, Russell & Mitchell 2000; Visser 1995). However, a recent study which explored the scale and characteristics of recreation displacement in New Zealand (Greenway, Cessford & Leppens 2007) challenged these findings, and concluded that ‘Displacement does not appear to be a generic issue in the New Zealand outdoors, and managers should treat reported instances on a case-by-case basis’ (p. 164). These contradictions may be due to the fact that it is very difficult to assess the extent to which displacement is actually occurring. The major issue is that displacement cannot be assessed on-site because it necessarily involves a change in behaviour or use - which means that people are no longer using the location or the time that the researcher is concerned about. As a result, much of the existing knowledge about displacement remains anecdotal.

4.2.5 Wilderness perception research

Although wilderness perception research still falls into the ‘cognitive behavioural’ category, it represented an important departure from many of the studies outlined earlier in this chapter, because the primary aim was to understand the various meanings that wilderness has for individuals. The first piece of wilderness perception research was undertaken by George Stankey in 1973; but it did not become a common topic of study until the mid 1980s (see, for example, Borrie & Birzell 2001; Borrie & Roggenbuck 1995; Hammitt & Madden 1989; Higham 1996; Shultis & Kearsley 1989; Scherl 1989; Shultis 1991; Wilson 1979). The key assumption underlying this work is that wilderness is a subjective concept which has no commonly agreed physical reality, and only exists where personal cognition dictates (Higham et al. 2000). Researchers have attempted to test this theory by comparing the wilderness perceptions of two (or more) different study samples, or between groups within a sample. This approach has been especially popular in New Zealand. For example Wilson (1979) compared the wilderness perceptions of regular back country users and the general public. Shultis (1991) compared the views of the general public with back country users and Higham (1996) examined wilderness perceptions amongst international visitors to New Zealand conservation land.

51 For a more detailed description of this process (in the context of a wildlife attraction), refer to Duffus & Dearden (1990) or Higham (1998a).
The ‘duality of wilderness’ (Shultis 1999) has also been the focus of some wilderness perception studies, which have highlighted the fact that wilderness implies both a state of mind (a highly subjective concept) and a political construct (as defined in policy or legislation) and that the two conceptions differ significantly (see Hendee, Stankey & Lucas 1990; Kearsley 1990; Kreiger 1973; Stankey & Schreyer 1987). Public knowledge of wilderness policies and legislation, particularly the activities and facilities deemed acceptable within such areas has been found to be very limited in both the United States (Young 1980; Utter 1983; Burde & Fadden 1995) and in New Zealand (Shultis 1999). Most respondents in these studies believed that many activities and facilities specifically forbidden by wilderness legislation or policy were allowed in wilderness areas (ibid.).

Wilderness perception research has been extended through the use of purism scales to empirically measure an individual’s orientation towards the wilderness ideal (a totally pristine and unmodified natural setting) (Shafer & Hammitt 1995). Stankey first developed such a scale in his 1973 study, and various authors have since adopted this approach (see for example Higham 1997; Jackson & Shin 1993; Shin & Reiner 1997; Shultis 1999; Young 1983). The scale has successfully been used to categorise respondents into discrete classes of wilderness purism (i.e. the extent to which they require a ‘pure’ wilderness, free from any forms of development or human interference). Factors that have been found to influence an individual’s degree of wilderness purism include nationality, age and previous back country experience (Higham 1996).

One of the main implications of these findings is that wilderness can be experienced in a variety of settings. This idea has been advanced by a number of authors in New Zealand (Higham 1996; Kearsley 1982, 1990, 1997; Shultis 1991 and Shultis & Kearsley 1989). The conclusions drawn from these studies suggest that many people’s wilderness needs can be satisfied in modified environments, and that very few wilderness recreationists actually require a completely pristine, unmodified natural area to satisfy them. This implies that, through careful information provision, managers should be able to direct the majority of visitors to more developed areas without diminishing their wilderness experience, and, as a consequence, to preserve the most fragile areas for the wilderness purists for whom pristine settings are a necessity (Higham et al. 2000).

A limitation of many of these studies, however, is that they do not specifically include wilderness users in the study sample. This is likely to be due to the difficulty of identifying and contacting this particular visitor group, which is often very small, and spread out over a
large area. It could also be due to the fact that traditional on-site survey methods used are not really feasible in wilderness. As a result, much of the existing wilderness perception research may have missed out on the views of wilderness users altogether – ironically the very people who have the greatest first hand knowledge of wilderness.

Nonetheless, this body of research has made important contributions to the wilderness literature. First, it has highlighted the diversity of wilderness meanings and values amongst different sub-groups of the population (a line of enquiry which has been continued in contemporary wilderness studies and will be discussed in section 4.3 and 4.4). Second, it has demonstrated to managers that often the legislative definitions of wilderness are far from the general public’s understanding of what wilderness means (leading to calls for more in-depth, qualitative research on wilderness meanings). And third, despite the apparent diversity of wilderness perceptions amongst individuals and groups, these studies have shown that people across a variety of Western societies and cultures tend to share similar views about the fundamental character of wilderness and also show strong support for wilderness protection (see Shultis 1999).

4.2.6 Limitations of the cognitive behavioural approach

The wilderness research discussed thus far in this chapter (motives, benefits, impacts and wilderness perceptions) has provided useful trend information for wilderness managers, including a broad overview of the reasons why people visit wilderness, what people value about wilderness, and the benefits they gain from recreating in wilderness. In addition, the behavioural research has demonstrated that increasing use of wilderness can reduce the quality of peoples’ experiences through social impacts such as crowding, conflict and the use of motorised transport (Cole 1987; Frissel & Duncan 1965; Graefe & Vaske 1990; Hammit & Cole 1998; Kuss, Manning & Lime 2000).

Despite this, several conceptual and methodological issues have arisen in the literature concerning this research (Manning 1999). Criticisms have included the overly descriptive nature of the research; an excessive focus on practical management issues or problem-solving; a lack of theoretical depth; an inability to fully explain the phenomenon of wilderness and for their failure to recognise that wilderness can have different meanings for different people52 (see, for example Ballinger & Manning 1998; Burge, Buchanan & Christensen 1981; Heywood 1986; Iso-Ahola 1986; Moore & Graefe 1994; Patterson et al. 1998; Reid 1987; Riddick, DeSchriver & Weissinger 1984; Williams et al. 1992). Broader criticisms of the

52 The wilderness perception research described in this section is an exception to this.
cognitive behavioural approach have been made within other social science disciplines and are also worth mentioning because of their relevance to recent wilderness research. The major criticisms have been: the reductionist nature of the approach, the failure to acknowledge humans as conscious and reflexive agents, the ascription of primacy to external stimuli, while minimising the role or effects of human cognition and the dismissal of the role of human intelligence. For a review of these critiques in the field of environmental psychology, see Sagert & Winkel (1990) and Williams (2004), and in the broader context of social science see Ley (1981). The crux of his argument is:

...are systematically detached from the social contexts of their actions. And yet, as humanistically oriented work in social geography has indicated, it is precisely within the contexts of a social world that actions originate and have their meaning. An understanding of such actions cannot proceed in separation from the social milieus to which they are dialectically bound. (p. 217).

These critiques will be addressed in more detail in the discussion of the socio-cultural approach in the following section. As a result of these criticisms (and methodological and theoretical developments in the wider social sciences) there have been some major changes in the approaches and methods used in wilderness research. These form the basis of the following discussion.

### 4.3 Socio-cultural approaches to wilderness

As noted in Chapter One, there has been a significant shift in the theoretical and methodological approach to wilderness research over the past few decades. This has been driven by a number of factors, including a growing awareness of the limitations of traditional research approaches; the seemingly narrow focus of key concepts in existing wilderness legislation (Patterson et al. 1998); changes in the way wilderness is managed53 (Manning 2003) and developments in the broader field of social science (see Ley 1981). The major weakness of the behavioural approach is that it fails to fully explain the complex phenomenon of wilderness as it relates to experience. The narrow, restrictive (and predominantly quantitative) methods which characterise this approach do not enable researchers to uncover the meanings and values behind people’s views about wilderness. Findings from these studies indicated, for example, that people liked to visit wilderness to ‘escape’ or ‘to challenge themselves’, but the methods did not provide a way of exploring what these concepts actually meant to respondents, or of drawing out rich detail about each individual’s recreation

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53 Rather than measuring satisfaction levels, wilderness areas are increasingly managed for explicitly defined objectives and opportunities, and research is undertaken to assess the extent to which these objectives are being met.
experience and the social and cultural contexts in which they occurred. As explained by Ley (1981): ‘Meanings are contextual, so that the same object may be viewed differently on separate occasions by a single observer as the context changes…’ (p. 214).

As a result of this, there has been a move away from restrictive behavioural approaches to wilderness, towards more socio-cultural and geographic research programmes, adopting a variety of qualitative methods. These approaches promote the view that ‘the person is a social agent, who seeks out and creates meaning in the environment, rather than an autonomous, need-driven individual’ (Williams & Carr 1993, p. 210). The importance of socio-cultural research in contemporary wilderness management has been emphasised by a number of authors in recent times (see Borrie, Christensen, Watson, Miller & McCollum 2002; Patterson et al. 1998; Watson 2004; Watson & Williams 1995; Williams 2000a, and Williams & Carr 1993). Williams & Carr (1993) noted that ‘wildlands are increasingly the subject of differing and often conflicting meanings, norms and behaviours’ (p. 210) and proposed that without an understanding of the multiple meanings people ascribe to wilderness, managers are ‘ill prepared to provide recreation opportunities to suit the diversity of cultural values, norms or lifestyles of the recreation clientele’ (p. 210):

Much of the recent wilderness research adopts a socio-cultural approach, and draws on the disciplines of sociology, social geography and anthropology. Rather than assessing wilderness motives or visitor satisfaction levels, this research emphasises the multiple meanings and interpretations of wilderness. It focuses on the nature of the experience, and seeks to understand how and why wilderness has a particular meaning for a particular person or group of people. Williams (2002a) has termed this the ‘social constructionist approach’:

A social constructionist approach to wilderness addresses the historical, cultural, and political processes by which humans seek out, create and contest specific wilderness meanings, and how these meanings, in turn, structure social actions in and with respect to those places. (p. 123).

More detail about studies that have used such approaches is included later in this chapter.

These theoretical developments in the field of wilderness research have also necessitated significant methodological advances. As noted earlier, a growing body of researchers no longer deemed the traditional survey-based approaches suitable for the complex and subjective types of questions being addressed. Thus contemporary social wilderness studies typically use qualitative research methods (or a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods) such as participant observation, interviews or focus groups because they allow
researchers to gain a much deeper insight into the phenomenon under study, and to see things through the eyes of their participants\textsuperscript{54}:

\ldots the aim [of these methodological developments] has been to reconstitute the subjective meanings of individuals and groups, in order to understand their actions and the meanings that places hold for them. There has been an attempt to gain an insider’s view, the definition of the situation by individuals in the constitution of their social worlds and their experience of place. \textsuperscript{(Ley 1981, p. 220)}

Recent publications on social science methods have also emphasised the necessity of frequently reviewing (and adapting if necessary) the chosen research methods and their appropriateness with relation to the research questions and the social context (i.e. whether they are capable of fully exploring the complexities of the topic under study). Law & Urry (2004) argued that today’s social world is complex and ‘slippery’, and that in order to cope with this complexity, the social sciences need to re-think their methods and research approaches accordingly (for example, by adopting inter-disciplinary and multi-method approaches).

\textbf{4.3.1 Socio-cultural wilderness studies}

One of the first major studies to adopt an explicitly qualitative, socio-cultural approach to wilderness was undertaken in the United States by Patterson \textit{et al.} in 1998, and was entitled ‘An hermeneutic approach to studying the nature of wilderness experiences’. The impetus for the research came from wilderness managers who were dissatisfied with the depth of information they were obtaining from existing motivational approaches. The study adopted an ‘alternative approach’ which ‘focused on the meaning of the experience’ (p. 425). It used open-ended interviews, administered immediately after the recreation experience in the Juniper Prairie Wilderness Area in the United States, with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the diversity and nature of visitors’ experiences. The researchers found that this approach enabled them to gain a greater insight into the actual recreation experience, and to explore the meaning behind some of the concepts (such as challenge and closeness to nature) that visitors used to describe their experiences. The findings also supported the notion that wilderness experiences are unique to each individual, and cannot be adequately understood through simple survey-based research approaches such as the traditional satisfaction model\textsuperscript{55}.

\textsuperscript{54} Chapter Six contains a more detailed discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the various methods used in wilderness research.

Several authors have extended this work by attempting to qualitatively explore the meanings and values that different groups in society ascribe to wilderness (see, for example, Alessa & Watson 2002; Watson et al. 2004). Findings have indicated that wilderness has a wide range of meanings for different people, and that these understandings are inextricably interlinked with the social and historical context in which they occur. Daniel Williams is a strong advocate for socio-cultural approaches to wilderness, and has written a number of papers promoting the ‘social constructionist’ approach (see, for example, Williams 2000, 2002a, 2002b). His studies have examined the social contexts within which wilderness meanings have developed, and the implications that this has for various groups in society:

…focusing on a socio-cultural view of meaning causes us to examine not just what values people hold, but where these values and meanings come from, how they vary from place to place and community to community, how they are negotiated in society, how they are used in conflict situations, how they are impacted by modernisation, and how they influence policy decisions.

(Williams 2000, p. 81)

The key message underlying these studies is that the meaning of wilderness is ‘anchored in history, and culture, and not simply the inherent, enduring, tangible, and visible properties of nature’ (Williams 2000, p. 78). In other words, wilderness is socially constructed, and an understanding of the way wilderness meanings are negotiated and contested is ‘necessary for the effective allocation and management of wilderness’ (2000, p. 77). He states that one of the primary objectives of his research is to encourage other academics and managers in the field of wilderness to re-think the meaning and role of wilderness in the context of modern society, and to adopt a social constructionist approach in order to better understand the phenomenon of wilderness. Some of the reasons why managers appear to have been slow to adopt this approach will be discussed in section 4.6.

4.4 Wilderness as a social construction

The key assumption underpinning the socio-cultural wilderness research is that wilderness is a social construction, and that the role of human agency is paramount in creating wilderness meanings56. Shields (1991) was an early advocate for such approaches. He proposed that the values and ideas about a particular place (or concept) are a product of specific geographical, socio-cultural, environmental and political forces, and that they are manifested in the way in which the place becomes understood as being appropriate for certain types of activities and practices. Mansvelt & Perkins (1998) and other geographers have also undertaken research in

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56 This notion was promoted in the wilderness perception research, and is also evidenced in the changing views of wilderness described in Chapter Three.
The view of wilderness as a social construct developed from a line of enquiry in the broader field of nature and environment, which proposed that the meaning of nature is created in social and geographic space, and varies significantly between individuals and societies. This body of research came to prominence in the mid 90s, and since then, there has been a steady stream of research examining the concept of nature as a social construction, and exploring ways in which peoples’ views of nature are shaped, given meaning, negotiated and contested\(^57\). Extensions of this research have also examined the notion that nature is a lived or dwelt experience (Crouch 2003; McNaughten & Urry 2001; Watson 2003), and the hybridity of nature (Franklin 2002; Watson 2003; Whatmore 1999).

The first significant piece of work to put forward the argument that \textit{wilderness} is socially constructed was written by William Cronon, an environmental historian, in 1995. The essay was entitled ‘The trouble with wilderness; or, getting back to the wrong nature’. Like the social nature research, Cronon’s key argument was that wilderness is a ‘profoundly human creation… the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history’ (p. 69). Using the example of wilderness in the United States, he argued that wilderness has become what it is today because of the social, historic and cultural values which it embodies, and the purposes that it serves for certain groups in society. The dramatic transformation in the western concept of wilderness (described in Chapter Two), he believes, was rooted in two pervasive doctrines in American society – the frontier and the sublime.

According to Cronon, American citizens support the idea of wilderness because it serves as a reminder of how things used to be, and how things should be. Wilderness is a ‘monument to the nation’s past’, embodying a sense of nostalgia for a past way of life that the citizens want to hold on to. The dominant construction of wilderness in America derives from the fact that it embodies a sense of unique American identity, and provides something for people to identify with when they talk about ‘home’: ‘Wild country became a place not just of religious redemption, but of national renewal, the quintessential location for experiencing what it meant to be an American’ (Cronon 1995, p. 76).

Since the publication of Cronon’s article, this line of enquiry has recently been extended by a number of wilderness researchers within the disciplines of sociology and geography, who

have sought to explore the multiple meanings people ascribe to wilderness (see, for example, Cronon 1995; Grant 1998; Low 2002; Nash 1969; Runte 1987; Schrepfer 2005; Williams 2000, 2002a). These studies have given increasing support to the idea that wilderness is socially constructed. Williams (2000) for example, emphasised the role of culture in the development of the wilderness concept: ‘it is impossible to talk about the meaning and value of wilderness without acknowledging to some degree the role of culture in giving meaning to things’ (p. 78). Low (2002) argued that the United States wilderness resource serves to give Americans a cultural identity: ‘wilderness in the nineteenth century carried the baggage of American patriotism’ (p. 38), and Schuster et al. (2005) came to a similar conclusion: ‘Wilderness seems to be one path to the creation of, and continuation of, American heritage, history, and national identity’ (p. 116). Borrie & Roggenbuck (1995) and Williams (2002a) drew attention to the strong links between wilderness and pioneering days in the Western world. They emphasised the cultural meanings of wilderness for citizens of countries with a pioneering background, and with a history of outdoor recreation: ‘Recreational use of wilderness and nature became a ritual for reproducing the frontier experience and what was taken to be American character’ (Williams 2002a, p. 123). Eriksen argued that wilderness and wild nature are crucial aspects of national identity in countries with a strong cultural history of outdoor recreation. He argued that the stereotypical image of the ‘down to earth, nature-loving Norwegian’ is founded on ideological and moral grounds, related to the country’s social and political history, and the citizens’ desire to distinguish themselves from other European nations:

The rural connection and love of nature are very important aspects of the public self-definition of what is typically Norwegian… A Norwegian who lacks interest in nature and friluftsliv (‘life out in the open’) may well be accused of being a poor specimen by his fellow citizens. (Eriksen 1993, p. 9)

Grant (1998) studied the meaning of wilderness in the Canadian Arctic, and concluded that the contemporary Southern Canadian understanding of wilderness is an ‘identity myth’ (p. 39) which has developed because of a desire to protect and maintain the myth of the ‘frontier’ and the ‘sublime’:

Southern Canadians cling tenaciously to their vision of the arctic as a pristine wilderness, their dreams kept alive by travel brochures and coffee table books that revisit the sublime through the skilful use of colour photography. These images continue to inspire wilderness canoeists to travel north to ‘find themselves’.

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58 Eriksen is an anthropologist who has written extensively on Norwegian cultural identity.
59 As opposed to the Innuit of Northern Canada. Grant (1998) found that the native Innuit of Northern Canada have an historic understanding of the Arctic that is totally different from the Southern Canadians’ view of it as a ‘wilderness refuge for the white man’ (p. 33).
Further, Schrepfer (2005) claimed that protecting the American wilderness ‘preserves centuries of a multi-layered, cultural history of meanings imposed upon meanings, realities laid upon fantasies, and fantasies set against the force of very special places’ (p. 8).

There have been a number of criticisms of Cronon’s (1995) article – primarily from wilderness protection advocates and managers who disagree with his contention that legislative wilderness reinforces divisions between humans and nature, and that wilderness represents a complete contrast to the ‘tarnished lands’ of human habitation (e.g. Cohen 1996; Dunlap 1996; Hays 1996; Havlick 2006).

### 4.4.1 Revival of the concept of ‘place’

The adoption of socio-cultural approaches to wilderness and outdoor recreation research has coincided with, and arguably helped to inspire, the revival of several existing theories, and has also led to the development of new theoretical concepts. The most relevant example in the case of wilderness research is the revitalisation of the concept of ‘place’, which has moved beyond psychological notions of place attachment towards a more constructionist approach, looking at ‘place identity’.

Critics of earlier place-attachment research (described in section 4.2.1) claimed that the concept failed to adequately account for the role of the individual and social groups in creating and developing meaning for and about particular places (see, for example, Egoz, Bowring & Perkins 2006; Kaltenborn & Williams 2002; Knudsen, Soper & Metro-Roland 2007). Findings from the new socio-cultural studies promote the view that there can be no singular definition of place because each individual interprets places and situations differently, based on a multitude of factors such as their background, expectations, activities undertaken and individual characteristics (Cloke & Perkins 1998; Massey 1995).

Perkins & Thorns (2001) noted that place meanings are created through a process of negotiation (and often conflict) between local residents and other actors - such as visitors to the region, managers and tourism operators. The focus of place-based research has, thus, shifted from attempting to define the characteristics of a particular place, towards a more qualitative exploration of peoples’ interpretations of place. The key idea underlying these studies is that places are multiple and contested – they can be ‘read’ in a variety of ways by different individuals, and need to be understood as evolving discourses between different groups in society.

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60 For a recent review of place concepts, theories and philosophies in natural resource management, see Williams (2008).
An important finding from several of these studies is that there are often differences in what Knudsen et al. (2007) describe as ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ views of a place. ‘Locals’ and ‘visitors’ or ‘tourists’ can have different ideas about, and attribute different meanings to a particular place. This can, in turn, affect their experiences in, and interpretations of those places, and also how they feel about any possible changes to those places (see, for example, Hull & Revell 1989; Scott 2006; Zaring 1977). It can also increase the potential for conflict between local or traditional users of protected natural areas and newcomers. This will be discussed further in the following section.

Another key finding from the recent place studies is that the interactions between people and place/space are multi-sensory and two-way – that is to say that people use their bodies to interact with the environment, while at the same time the environment interacts with them to produce meaning within that place. ‘the relationship is mutual, for places in turn develop and reinforce the identity of the social group that claims them’ (Ley 1981, p. 219). The idea that people actively participate in their environment (rather than having their actions dictated by static structures and rules) has been termed ‘performativity’ and has since been taken up by researchers in various disciplines (see Crouch 2003; Franklin 2001; McNaughten & Urry 2001; Perkins & Thorns 2001; Veijola & Jokinen 1994; Watson 2003). It is prevalent in much of the recent work on nature-society interactions, and has been adopted by wilderness researchers in the past decade. Through this process of participation, it is argued that people are able to construct and reconstruct meaning for particular places, and identities for themselves.

The advantages of using a performance approach have been documented in various disciplinary areas (see Adler 1989; Perkins & Thorns 2001; Scott 2006; Veijola & Jokinen 1994), but the uptake has been relatively slow (particularly in policy research). It has been suggested that this is primarily due to the fact that the majority of tourism and recreation policies are based around static ideas about human-environment relationships, which would be likely to be disrupted by the application of such concepts (see Szerszynski et al. 2003).

4.5 Changing wilderness meanings

Some socio-cultural wilderness researchers have also extended the behavioural programme by exploring the effects of external influences (such as technology and commercial resource use)
on the meanings and values that people associate with wilderness, and the ways these values are created in the flow of socio-spatial interaction influenced by deeply embedded place meanings and myths (Cloke & Perkins 1998). (See, for example Eriksen 1993, 1996; Vail 2000; Williams 2002a, 2002b; Williams & Patterson 1999). The commercialisation or commodification of wilderness is one example of an external influence which has been studied in this way. Watson (2000) believes that it is one of the biggest issues for the future of wilderness management. Commercialisation can take the form of commercial developments such as logging and mining or commercial recreation such as organised tourism activities. Although some types of commercial activity may be regarded as more acceptable than others, the main concern underlying these fears is that any type of commercial activity may erode or destroy traditional wilderness meanings.

The term ‘commodification’ is frequently used to describe a process which often results from an increase in tourism to a particular area. It can be defined as ‘an inversion of exchange value over use value’ (Cloke & Perkins 1998, p. 526). Commodification occurs when areas and the ideas and activities which they embody (such as rest, relaxation or escapism) are transformed into commodities and sold to paying consumers (ibid.). It involves a transformation of the meaning (or the value) of existing places, cultures and activities as a result of perceived opportunities to profit from tourism (ibid.). These processes are believed to go against many of the traditional values of wilderness such as freedom, solitude and escape.

Various studies have explored the role of commodification of place and culture through tourism, and a number of theoretical perspectives have since been advanced. Much of this research, however, has either been undertaken in urban (rather than wilderness) environments (Game 1991, Meethan 1996), or has focused on the impact of tourism on local indigenous cultures, rather than traditional users of the resource (for example, see Cohen 1982; Goldberg 1983; Kirtsoglou & Theodosopolos 2004; Stymeist 1996). The majority of such studies have been based on early assumptions made by Cohen (1988) that increased tourism leads to commoditisation of areas, and that this eventually destroys the meaning of the place, making it nothing more than a tourism product with a commercial value. Findings have thus tended to demonstrate that commodification is a negative phenomenon which can often cause local animosity towards tourism, environmental degradation, and lead to the eventual ‘death’ of a tourism site (see, for example Britton 1991; Hughes 1992; Johnston & Edwards 1994).

More recently, a number of researchers have challenged the view that commodification is an entirely negative process, and have argued that it differs in form and content from place to
They believe that, although commodification may alter the meaning of certain cultural products, it does not necessarily destroy the meaning, and may even add meaning to existing cultures – which could be seen in a positive light by many locals (Stymeist 1996). Cloke & Perkins (1998) noted that:

Commodification may be seen as one of a number of processes at play in the creation of place that must be investigated in specific time-space locations at the intersection of the global and the local. Increased tourism-related commercialisation will not therefore destroy it in the sense of making the place meaningless; rather this commercialisation will take the form of a new importation in which local and global actors… will compete and/or cooperate in the ongoing and emergent construction of the meaning of place. (p. 530)

An important feature of several of the more recent commodification studies is thus the idea that commodification can be seen as a contested process – that is to say that it may be negotiated or resisted by local actors (or by visitors) who wish to retain the existing meanings ascribed to places and activities, or to ascribe different meanings to them (Game 1991; Johnston & Edwards 1994; Meethan 1996). This process of contestation may be more evident in places, such as wilderness, to which people have developed strong attachments. (See also Cloke & Perkins 1998, 2002 for a more detailed discussion of this).

A key finding from the socio-cultural research into factors affecting wilderness is that people can develop strong cultural attachments to wilderness, and that anything believed to threaten these attachments is likely to cause conflict and tension between local users and newcomers because traditional users fear the loss of their cultural identity: ‘The old and familiar is replaced by the new and foreign, and threatens to erase one's uniqueness’ (Eriksen 1993 p. 20). Williams (2002a) believes that ‘traditional’ or ‘indigenous’ meanings of wilderness are under threat of being destabilised or ‘thinned out’ as a result of globalisation and modernisation:

Modern ways of living and travelling allow more people to access wilderness meanings and values and in the process appropriate and transform them for their own benefit. More people defining what a place (such as wilderness) means, destabilises traditional meanings and intensifies conflict. (p. 130)

As a result, Williams argued that wilderness will become even more important as a source of national and collective identity, and that the potential for conflict between ‘insiders’ (traditional users) and ‘outsiders’ (new users) will increase. This idea is supported by Eriksen (1993) and Cuba & Hummon (1993) in the broader field of cultural studies: ‘As a general rule, it is when the carriers of an identity feel that it is threatened from the outside that it becomes most important to them’ (Eriksen 1993 p. 21).
4.6 Resistance to socio-cultural approaches to wilderness

As noted in section 4.4, Cronon’s (1995) original essay, in which he contended that wilderness was a social construction, generated considerable controversy amongst wilderness advocates and conservationists. This strong reaction against the notion that wilderness is socially constructed may be, in part, because the acceptance of such a claim could pose a significant threat to existing wilderness policy and legislation. Wilderness legislation necessarily contains very specific ideas about what the concept of wilderness means, and what is appropriate (or not) in wilderness. The more tangible and static meanings of wilderness have traditionally been the focus of wilderness management because they are easier to measure, represent and quantify than shifting values (Williams 2002a). Wilderness managers may thus be unwilling to accept that concepts such as nature and wilderness are socially constructed because this could leave established legislative meanings open to contestable interpretations, which could threaten the ‘status quo’. It would also force them to consider the fact that their work also plays a major role in creating and negotiating wilderness meanings (Williams 2000). This unwillingness may also be, in part, due to the important role that the traditional legislative definitions of wilderness play in the identity of many countries, and a desire to protect this identity. Graham (1997) explained this in the context of wilderness in Canada:

[the Arctic ‘wilderness’] plays an exceedingly important role in Canadian identity… this belief obstructs historical understanding by creating a psychological unwillingness to expose the myth to critical scholarship… To examine the myth too closely might be to destroy it altogether, and with it, the identity which it supports (p. 194)

Authors such as Williams (2000a, 2002), Williams & Carr (1993) and Havlick (2006) have argued that viewing wilderness as a social construction does not necessarily deny the fact that it is a ‘natural’ space, with attributes which can be defined and measured, and which exist outside the domains of humanity. I return to this issue in the final discussion (Chapter Eleven).

4.7 Chapter Summary

Wilderness has been studied from a variety of theoretical perspectives and by researchers from a variety of disciplines. Until relatively recently, the predominant approach to wilderness research had been a cognitive behavioural one, through which wilderness was viewed as a goal oriented recreation activity, motivated by the desire to achieve specific psychological outcomes. Much has been learnt about wilderness as a result of these behavioural studies (for example, motives for visiting wilderness, benefits and impacts on the
experience), but on the whole, such approaches are limited in their ability to account for the complex and subjective meanings underlying the phenomenon of wilderness. Approaching wilderness from a socio-cultural perspective enables researchers to overcome these issues. It allows them to explore the meanings and values underlying people’s interpretations of specific phenomena, and in doing so, to uncover complex ideas about how their beliefs have developed in a particular social, political, economic and geographical context. Some of the recent studies which have adopted such an approach have been outlined in this chapter. These studies are based on the notion that wilderness is socially constructed, and that the meanings and values people hold for it are continually being produced and reproduced within a particular social context. Findings have demonstrated that the value of wilderness is culturally and historically specific, and that people can develop strong attachments to wilderness and protected natural areas – particularly in countries with historical traditions of outdoor and nature-based recreation. This implies that any developments which could potentially undermine existing cultural traditions, practices and values related to nature and the natural environment are likely to cause conflict between traditional users and newcomers or ‘outsiders’, and that these conflicts are likely to have deep socio-cultural roots, related to national identity and cultural practices.

A number of international researchers are advocating the socio-cultural approach to wilderness, but as yet, no-one has adopted it in a New Zealand context. What is missing from the New Zealand wilderness literature is an examination of the meanings and values that wilderness users hold for the resource, and an exploration of the social and historical context in which these meanings have developed. This could be captured by a socio-cultural approach which focuses explicitly on how wilderness is used, how it is interpreted, and how this is linked to notions of identity and culture. Managers may, however, be reluctant to adopt this approach because findings from such research could potentially undermine many of the static ideas about wilderness in existing policy and legislation. Despite this, such an approach could be extremely useful for exploring various issue of current debate - for example, the potential threats that commercialisation and increasing tourism pose to wilderness values in New Zealand. My choice of methods and theoretical approach reflect the need for more socio-cultural wilderness research in New Zealand. In the current study, I examine people’s experiences in New Zealand wilderness, how they interpret these experiences, and how these experiences relate to the way in which they construct wilderness.

The following chapter presents information about the study setting for this research, including details about the social, ecological and geographical situation of Fiordland National Park.
Chapter Six describes the methods used in this study, and how they were specifically adopted in Fiordland.
Chapter 5

Background and Study Setting

5.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces Fiordland National Park – the case study site for this research. It is important to provide background details about the study setting because the issues discussed later in this thesis need to be understood in the broader context of the Park’s natural and human history. It is a combination of these variables that has given Fiordland its distinctive wilderness character, and which attracts wilderness visitors to this area. The chapter is divided into three main sections. Section 5.2 describes the history and physical characteristics of Fiordland National Park, outlines recent visitor and tourism trends, and gives a brief overview of the key management issues. Section 5.3 describes the current management of the Park, and section 5.4 presents information on tourism activities in remote and wilderness areas of the Park.

5.2 Fiordland National Park

The area now known as Fiordland National Park was recognised as having significant conservation values as early as 1905, when 940,000 hectares were set aside as a public reserve for protected area purposes (DOC 2006a). Fiordland National Park, as it is known today, was

“Fiordland National Park represents a legacy of every New Zealander, for every park visitor; a cherished corner of the world where mountains and valleys compete with each other for room, where scale is almost beyond comprehension, rainfall is measured in metres, and scenery encompasses the broadest width of emotions. It is a place of solitude, of retreat, of quiet rejuvenation…

Welcome to Fiordland, land of the last retreat”

(Department of Lands & Survey 1986, p. 1)
formally gazetted in 1952. It is the largest national park in New Zealand, and one of the largest in the world (DOC 2006a). Covering 1,260,200 hectares, it forms part of the Te Wahipounamu World Heritage Area in South West New Zealand and constitutes one of the great wilderneses of the Southern hemisphere (DOC 2006a). The Park stretches from the south western corner of the South Island to Martins Bay in the north (represented by the green section in Figure 5.1). It encompasses most of Fiordland, including all of the lakes and rivers within the boundaries, the numerous islands along the Fiordland coast. The Park is managed by the Department of Conservation under a variety of statutes and policies (discussed in more detail in section 5.3) and the waters of the fiords below the shoreline (mean high water mark) are managed by the Southland Regional Council under the Resource Management Act 1991.

Figure 5.1: Fiordland National Park location
Fiordland National Park is renowned for its vast expanses of comparatively untouched, relatively inaccessible ‘wilderness’ and its outstanding wild landscape. It is also a popular recreation and tourism destination for New Zealanders and overseas visitors. Activities range in difficulty from short roadside walks to remote tramping and climbing opportunities requiring high levels of skill and endurance. The Park is also well-known for Milford Sound/Piopiotahi (Figure 5.2) - one of the icon tourist destinations of New Zealand, and the three ‘Great Walks’.

**Figure 5.2:** Milford Sound, Fiordland National Park

The main entry points to the Park are over 150 kilometres from the nearest large town (Invercargill), and over 650 kilometres from the South Island’s largest urban centre (Christchurch) (refer to Figure 5.1). This distance serves to reinforce the perception of remoteness that distinguishes Fiordland from many of New Zealand’s other national parks (DOC 2006a). Most visitors to the Park base themselves in the towns of Te Anau and Manapouri which are located just outside the eastern boundary (Figure 5.3). These two communities provide most of the tourist accommodation and services for the Park. Limited

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62 There are nine Great Walks in New Zealand. Great walks are New Zealand’s premier walking tracks, and are especially popular amongst overseas visitors. They are located in areas of great scenic beauty, and the huts and tracks are of a higher standard than other tramping tracks. Many of the Great Walks have management systems in place (such as booking systems or recommended one-way walking routes) during high season to ease visitor pressure. Guiding companies operate on several of the Great Walks.
service facilities (including visitor and staff accommodation, boat wharves, an airstrip and a cafe) are also provided at Milford Sound.

Figure 5.3: Fiordland National Park

5.2.1 Physical characteristics
The physical characteristics of Fiordland National Park are arguably its most distinctive feature. The area is famous for its combination of glaciated landforms, remote coastline, unique flora and fauna and abundant wildlife (see Figure 5.4). These natural features are one
of the major draw cards for wilderness visitors, and provide the crucially important physical setting for wilderness experiences in the Park (DOC 2006a).

Figure 5.4: Images of Fiordland National Park

Fiordland has an extremely wet, often cold and variable climate. It rains at Milford Sound over 180 days a year (Peat & Patrick 2005). The weather is dramatic, and frequently changes without warning. A combination of glaciation, river erosion and the harsh climate has led to the formation of a distinctive landscape, comprising towering snow-capped mountains, steep U- and V-shaped valleys, irregular ridges, fiords, waterfalls, lakes and snow fields (ibid). The fourteen fiords along the west coast of the Park provide one of the most distinctive features of
the Park. Although they are referred to as ‘sounds’, they are actually ‘fiords’; created when glaciers eroded the land to below sea level and then retreated, allowing the sea to re-occupy the valleys that they had made. The Fiordland coastline comprises these unique steep-sided fiords, river deltas and beaches backed by forested sand dunes. This combination of distinctive landforms makes Fiordland one of the most scenic locations in New Zealand (ibid.).

Almost two-thirds of Fiordland National Park is forested, comprising the largest continuous area of indigenous forest remaining in New Zealand (DOC 2006a). The Park is also home to a wide variety of alpine vegetation such as alpine scrub, tussock grasslands and alpine herbs (Peat & Patrick 2005). It provides a diverse habitat for a wide variety of indigenous and introduced flora and fauna. Many of New Zealand’s endemic birds live within the Park, including several of the less-common species such as the Piwauwau (Rock wren, Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos), the Whio (Blue duck, Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos), the Mohua (Yellow head, Mohoua ochrocephala), Tokoeka (Brown kiwi, Apteryx australis) and the Tawaki (Fiordland-crested penguin, Eudyptes pachyrhynchus). The critically endangered Takahe (Porphyrio hochstetteri) can also be found in the specially-protected area of the Murchison Mountains. Numerous exotic animals (including red deer, chamois, possums, rats, stoats and weasels) have been introduced (or have infiltrated) into Fiordland over the years. Some of these are causing significant damage to the native flora and fauna (ibid.).

5.2.2 History
Fiordland has had a rich and varied history prior to the area being designated as a national park. The Maori history dates back more than 1000 years, to the earliest settlers of the South Island, and the creation mythology of Ngāi Tahu (the largest Maori tribe in the South Island) (DOC 2006a). Maori were initially attracted to Fiordland by the Pounamu (greenstone), which was heavily sought after for the making of ornaments. The area also offered many other resources such as birds, fish and shellfish to sustain parties on their long expeditions in search of the stone. In 1853 the Crown purchased over seven million acres of land in the Southland region, much of which became Fiordland National Park as it is known today. Fiordland still has significant spiritual and symbolic meaning for Ngāi Tahu (ibid.).

Fiordland also figures prominently in the early European history of New Zealand, and the area continued to be a significant source of resources (seals, whales and gold) into the early twentieth century. Captain Cook was moored in Dusky Sound for three months in 1773 while the longitude and latitude of New Zealand was established (Hall-Jones 1990). Whalers and
sealers were attracted from the late 1700s and the area developed into an important haven for trans-Tasman and coastal shipping. A minor gold rush occurred in 1868, and the shipping associated with this also made sawmilling viable for a while. Temporary settlements arose around these two industries – for example at Cromarty and Te Oneroa in Preservation Inlet in the south-west of the Park (*ibid*). The only planned settlement in Fiordland National Park was Jamestown, in the north east of the Park, along the shores of Lake McKerrow. It was planned to be a pastoral settlement, however, the isolated and rugged nature of the terrain meant that land access was too difficult, and the venture soon collapsed (Hall-Jones 1990).

There were also some early significant conservation achievements in Fiordland before it became a national park. These initiatives have since become internationally recognised as pioneering work in wildlife conservation (DOC 2006a). In the early 1890s, the New Zealand Government set aside all of the larger islands and many of the smaller islands on the Fiordland coast (refer to Figure 5.3) as reserves with the aim of preserving their natural values. In 1894 Richard Henry was appointed as the country’s first Government Ranger of Crown Lands, and curator of Resolution Island (a large island off the coast of Fiordland). His role was to protect the indigenous bird populations by undertaking bird transfers from the mainland to the island. This was groundbreaking work in wildlife conservation, and made a huge contribution to knowledge of bird species such as the kākāpō* (ibid.* (Figure 5.5).

*Figure 5.5:  New Zealand kākāpō*

![New Zealand kākāpō](image)

*Source: kākāpō recovery programme 2006*

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63 The kākāpō is a rare ground-dwelling parrot that is endemic to New Zealand. There are currently only 86 kākāpō remaining in the world. They are part of an intense recovery programme managed by the Department of Conservation, and have been placed on a range of island sanctuaries around the country (kākāpō recovery programme 2006).
The Europeans introduced game species (such as deer and waterfowl) into Fiordland in the late 1800s as a means of encouraging recreation and tourism. Hunting has since become an extremely popular recreation activity in the Park, and plays an important part in the area’s history. Several huts are recognised as historic sites because of their association with the early deer hunting industry (Figure 5.6). Commercial fishing, tourism and coastal navigation have also played a significant role in the history of Fiordland. Remnants of the early fishing and tourism industry can be seen in various locations in and around the Park, and both industries remain important to the Park today.

Figure 5.6: Historic Fiordland hut

Photograph courtesy of research participant

Tourism had an early significance in Fiordland, even before it was designated as a national park. This was based around Milford Sound, the Milford Track and guiding services to Doubtful Sound and the Hollyford Valley. The establishment of the Park in 1952 coincided with the opening of the Homer Tunnel for public use, which provided direct road access to Milford Sound, and resulted in a significant increase in visitor numbers to the area. Milford still remains the most popular attraction for visitors to Fiordland national park, with over 470,000 visitors per year (DOC 2006a). Since park designation, Fiordland has become one of New Zealand’s prime tourist destinations for both overseas and domestic visitors (ibid.). A wide range of recreation activities can be undertaken within the Park, including walking, tramping, climbing, fishing, hunting, boating, sailing, kayaking, caving, rafting, nature tours, photography and general sightseeing. The fiords provide some of the best diving in New Zealand.

64 As noted earlier, the introduction of exotic species has also had significant detrimental impacts on forest health.
Zealand, while the Darren Mountains offer extensive alpine rock climbing (ibid.). As noted earlier, the ‘Great Walks’ tramping tracks are world renowned, and there are many other varied tramping opportunities available. Many companies provide commercial services for visitors to the Park, including guided walking, guided fishing and hunting, lake cruises, scenic flights and water taxis. The majority of these services are concentrated around the edges of the Park and the popular tourist sites such as Milford Sound and the Milford Road. The Park is also used for activities other than recreation and tourism, including commercial deer recovery operations, coastal fishing and hydro electricity developments, management control or elimination of exotic species to protect the Park’s natural values and the preservation of endangered wildlife such as the Takahe and the Kiwi (ibid.).

In 1990, Fiordland National Park was given prestigious World Heritage status by its inclusion in the Te Wāhi Pounamu South West New Zealand World Heritage Area (WHA). World Heritage Areas are designated under the World Heritage Convention because of their ‘outstanding universal value’ (UNESCO 2006). In receiving this status, Fiordland was recognised for its ‘superlative landscapes’, ‘vast wildernesses’, minimal evidence of human influence, and its ‘exceptional and natural beauty’ (ibid.). Designation as a World Heritage Area has conferred significant international standing to the Park, and places a legal obligation on the New Zealand Government to ‘take appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage’ (World Heritage Convention 1972). International attention on Fiordland has been enhanced by its designation as a national park and its status as a World Heritage Area65. The irony is that, despite the fact the Park was designated a World Heritage Area for its wilderness values and its absence of human influence, it has become an international tourist attraction, with steady increases in visitor numbers, and associated tourism facilities and services since the early 1990s (DOC 2006a). Issues associated with this growth will be discussed in the following section.

5.2.3 Visitor and tourism trends

Fiordland National Park currently receives around 500,000 visitors per year and has an increasingly significant reputation as one of New Zealand’s primary locations for outdoor and nature-based tourism (DOC 2006a). Annual visitor numbers to key sites within the Park in 2005 can be seen in Figure 5.7. The main visitor season occurs from mid October until the

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65 Research has found that World Heritage designation increases visitation (in particular, international visitation) to the site (see Buckley 2004b; Galvin 1997). But a study of World Heritage sites in the United Kingdom (Rodwell 2002) found that there was no proven relationship between World Heritage status and visitor numbers.
end of April (but this varies depending on the climatic conditions). Peak visitation is generally between January and March, although this period has been extending over recent years to include a longer shoulder season on either side of the peak (ibid.).

Figure 5.7: Fiordland National Park: visitor numbers to key sites

Visitor use of the Park is heavily concentrated in the north-eastern sector, from Manapouri to Milford, where there is a clearly evident tourist corridor. This is largely because of the well-developed road and water access. The predominant visitor infrastructure is also located within this sector, with trips in and around Te Anau, the Milford Road and Milford Sound being the most popular attractions (DOC 2006a). In addition, there are numerous less heavily-used
areas in the Park that have limited visitor infrastructure, and provide a different type of recreation opportunity for more experienced visitors. Examples of such places are the Dusky Track, Doubtful Sound and Preservation Inlet. Primarily due to their inaccessibility, these areas have traditionally been the domain of a small number of fit, able and highly experienced recreationists. However, data collected over the past ten years indicates that many of these areas are now receiving wider use (ibid.).

Visitor use data for particular tracks and huts in the Park are collected and reported annually by the Department of Conservation’s Southland Conservancy. This is done by using a variety of methods such as track counters, booking and permit systems, analysing hut book data\textsuperscript{66}, and hut warden observations. The majority of the data is concentrated on high use tracks, routes and huts - primarily because of the challenges involved with data collection in more remote areas\textsuperscript{67}. Information collected over the past few years illustrates that the number of people tramping the ‘Great Walks’ has remained relatively stable at a high level\textsuperscript{68}, and that use is still dominated by international visitors (around 70% on the Milford Track, 75% on the Routeburn Track, and 78% on the Kepler Track). In contrast, visitor use of camp sites along the Milford Road more than tripled between 2003 and 2005 (DOC 2005d). Visitor numbers to other popular sites have also increased significantly (DOC 2006a).

There is very little existing information about visitor use and impacts in remote and wilderness areas of the Park. The minimal existing data collected over the last ten years demonstrates that some of the more remote areas (such as the Dusky Track) are receiving more frequent use, and that the proportion of international visitors using these areas is increasing (DOC 2006a). A qualitative study undertaken in Fiordland National Park in 1995 found that visitors were being displaced from high-use areas to remote areas like the Dusky Track, and that this was likely to lead to further displacement from these areas into even more remote parts of the Park (Visser 1995).

Data published on the Department of Conservation website (collected by the Ministry of Tourism through the international visitor survey) provides an estimate of annual international visitor numbers to Fiordland National Park. Although the exact numbers are not accurate\textsuperscript{69}, the data is useful to show the trend of international visitor use of the Park over the past

\textsuperscript{66} Visitor books are supplied to all huts managed by the Department of Conservation for trampers to record their trip intentions, including party size and planned onward route. In recent years, this data has been analysed to provide information about visitor numbers, characteristics and use of DOC facilities.

\textsuperscript{67} Some of the difficulties with data collection in wilderness will be discussed in Chapter Six.

\textsuperscript{68} This is largely due to the booking systems which limit the number of people who can walk the tracks.

\textsuperscript{69} The International Visitor Survey is a sample survey of approximately 5200 international visitors to New Zealand, aged 15 years or older per year. Estimates of visitor numbers to particular sites are calculated from the sample.
decade. Figure 5.8 shows that international visitor use of the Park has more than doubled in less than ten years.

![Figure 5.8: International visitor numbers to Fiordland National Park 1997-2008](image)

The growth in recreation and tourism in the Park is likely to continue in line with broader tourism trends (DOC 2006a). This is bringing pressure for more, and improved, facilities and tourism initiatives, and may lead to changing recreational opportunities and visitor conflict in some areas (ibid.). Some of the key management issues in remote and wilderness areas of the Park are presented in section 5.3.3.

### 5.3 Management of Fiordland National Park

All public conservation land in New Zealand is now managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC) under a range of policy and legislation. The Department was established under the Conservation Act 1987, after central government restructured the environmental administration. Its legislative mandate is the Conservation Act 1987 and other key statutes listed in the Act, including the National Parks Act 1980. The agency is responsible for around one third of New Zealand’s land area, comprising three world heritage sites, 14 national parks, 20 conservation parks, and approximately 3,500 reserves and other types of protected area (DOC 2002b). The Department’s key functions are set out in section 6 of the Conservation Act 1987 (paraphrased in Figure 5.9).

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70 DOC effectively replaced three existing government departments – the Department of Lands and Survey, the National Parks Authority, and the New Zealand Forest Service – and is now the central government agency responsible for the conservation of New Zealand’s natural and historic heritage.
Fiordland National Park is administered by the Department of Conservation under the National Parks Act 1980; the General Policy for National Parks 2005, the Mainland Southland West-Otago Central Management Strategy 1998, the Fiordland National Park Management Plan 2006 and various park bylaws. The Southland Conservation Board is responsible for formulating management policy through the National Park Management Plan, and for advising on the implementation of the policies and strategies contained in this plan.\(^71\)

Conservation Boards are advisors to the Department and the New Zealand Conservation Authority (DOC 2007a). The New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) is a statutory, national body established by the Conservation Act 1987. It represents the long-term public interest in conservation and is closely involved in conservation planning and policy development. Key functions of the Board include the consideration and approval of Conservation Management Strategies and National Park Plans, proposed changes of designation of lands affecting national parks, and the consideration of conservation issues of national importance (\textit{ibid.}).

The sections of the various Acts and policies that are relevant to wilderness management in New Zealand have been outlined in Chapter Two. The current chapter presents only information that is specific to wilderness management in Fiordland National Park. The relevant sections of the Conservation Management Strategy and National Park Plan will now be discussed.

\textbf{5.3.1 Mainland Southland - West Otago Conservation Management Strategy}

The Mainland Southland -West Otago Conservation Management Strategy (DOC 2000) is the umbrella document which provides the general direction for the management of conservation land within the Southland and Otago region, including Fiordland National Park. This plan is

\(^{71}\) Conservation Boards are independent, legally-established bodies and there are 14 of them in New Zealand, each with a defined geographical area. Each Board represents the public in the work of the Department of Conservation, and conservation in general.
written in accordance with, and must not derogate from existing conservation legislation. It provides a very broad overview of conservation management in Southland, and contains little specific information regarding remote and wilderness areas in Fiordland National Park. Despite this, there are strong indications throughout the document that the protection and preservation of remote and wilderness areas is to be given high management priority. Wilderness is seen as a finite and fragile resource, and increasing visitor pressure is clearly portrayed as a major threat to its existence. The one explicit reference to remote and wilderness areas in Fiordland National Park in the plan is as follows:

Fiordland contains the only gazetted wilderness areas in Southland, two of only a handful in New Zealand. These wilderness areas are to be managed as places where visitors can truly ‘get away from it all’ and experience solitude, isolation and the challenge of experiencing nature on nature’s terms. Gazetted wilderness areas contain no recreation facilities such as huts or tracks, and aircraft access is only permitted for management purposes. This means that individuals accessing the areas require a high level of backcountry skill and self-reliance. (DOC 2000, p. 120)

This statement highlights the national and international importance of Fiordland’s wilderness areas, and emphasises the aspects of the wilderness experience that the Department of Conservation is striving to protect. Wilderness areas are clearly seen as offering a distinct form of recreation for a particular type of visitor.

The Strategy also contains several strong statements regarding wilderness management in general. There is a particular emphasis on the finite and fragile nature of wilderness, and the notion that allowing increased use involves ‘pushing back the frontiers’, with potentially serious consequences:

Southland, in particular, contains some of the last remaining areas of wilderness and remote recreational opportunities in New Zealand… wilderness values can be easily diluted through increased use and the type of use, and even minimal development… Wilderness and remote areas are a finite size and as access gets easier, these areas are shrinking. (p. 107)

There are several warnings about the perils of allowing unrestricted access to wilderness:

The desire to introduce people to wilderness and facilitate access for many people to experience nature has to be balanced against the shrinking of finite wilderness areas that once gone are never regained. (p. 108)

Increasing pressure to allow new developments and activities that draw more visitors often displaces traditional visitors and further forces back the frontiers of finite back country, remote and wilderness areas. (p. 121)

The key message regarding Fiordland wilderness in the CMS is that it is both nationally and internationally significant, and that its ongoing protection must be accorded high management
priority in the face of increasing visitor pressure. This is important because Conservation Management Strategies are the key guiding documents for National Park Plans. The Fiordland National Park Management Plan therefore comes under, and is necessarily in accordance with, the policies and directions contained within this document. The draft park plan is discussed next.

5.3.2 Draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan (DOC 2006a)

Consistent with the direction provided in the CMS, the Draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan has a very strong emphasis on protecting and preserving Remote and wilderness opportunities. Fiordland is described as a ‘wilderness of national and international significance’ (p. 122). Its greatest attributes are described as the ‘wild untouched landscape’, ‘remoteness values’ and ‘vast mountainous and rugged terrain’ (p. 138). Section 5.1 of the plan states that: ‘maintaining [the Park’s] wilderness/remote values should be accorded priority in visitor management’ (p. 121), and one of the major management challenges identified is to ensure the protection of traditional remote and wilderness recreation opportunities in the face of increasing domestic and international visitors. The importance of setting limits or thresholds for acceptable use levels is also a major theme that runs through the document.

The plan uses a three-stage approach to managing visitor activities in the Park. First, the Park is divided into various zones, or ‘visitor settings’ based on the ROS approach (see Chapter Two). The classification is based on the physical attributes of an area, existing visitor use, accessibility, facilities and services, and the level of management presence. The plan states what types of activities or developments are appropriate in each setting, and indicates where they may take place within each zone. Each setting is also linked to a particular visitor group (as identified in the Department of Conservation Visitor Strategy, discussed in Chapter Two). The purpose of zoning is to ensure that a range of visitor opportunities are provided in the Park, and that these opportunities are protected from incremental adverse change in the face of increasing visitor pressure (ibid.). It also helps to minimise conflict by separating different types of recreational activity. Second, the plan provides detailed provisions for specific activities or developments across the Park (e.g. commercial recreation and tourism activities, aircraft access and boating facilities). Finally, there are specific provisions relating to particular places where management issues have been identified, or where there is high visitor use (for example, Milford Sound). The plan is designed to give proactive, strategic direction.

72 The final park plan was completed whilst this research was being undertaken. This document (DOC 2008c) is also referenced in the current thesis.
for visitor management, whilst also remaining flexible enough to cope with future initiatives (DOC 2006a).

**Figure 5.10: Fiordland National Park visitor settings**

The two visitor settings that are relevant to the present study are Wilderness Areas and Remote Areas. Given its immense size and rugged nature, these settings make up a significant proportion of Fiordland National Park (see Figure 5.10). There are currently two gazetted wilderness areas: the Glaisnock Wilderness and the Pembroke Wilderness, which are represented by the dark green areas on Figure 5.10. There is also a proposal for a new wilderness area in the south-west corner of Fiordland (the South West/Cameron Wilderness).
Area - represented in light green, with diagonal lines crossing it). No visitor use data were uncovered for either of the two wilderness areas. Most visitors to these areas are believed to fall into the category ‘Remoteness Seekers’, as defined in the Visitor Strategy (DOC 1996) (described in Chapter Two).

There are currently seven Remote zones in Fiordland National Park: The Darrans Remote, the Northern Remote, the Western Remote, the Eastern Remote, the Southern Remote, the Doubtful Sound Remote and the Southern Sounds Historic Sites. They are represented by the lighter green areas on Figure 5.10. Each zone is managed slightly differently to reflect the unique recreation opportunities that it provides. Very little visitor use information about these areas was uncovered. As with the wilderness areas, the visitor group which is believed to frequent these areas the most is Remoteness Seekers (RS), although Back Country Adventurers (BCA) may also visit some of the more accessible areas (DOC 2006a).

The management directions for Wilderness and Remote settings are divided into several sections. First, an overview of the recreation opportunities for each setting is provided. This is followed by a description of the specific management objectives, with an indication of how they are to be implemented. Finally, each setting is broken down into geographical units, with a detailed description of the specific provisions for each location. Given the detail included in the place-specific provisions for each remote and wilderness area in the Park, it is not appropriate or necessary to describe each of them individually here. However, it is important to outline the objectives and implementation strategies for each type of setting. These are summarised in Table 5.1.

5.3.3 Management Issues

Improved access can result in changing use patterns and changing recreation opportunity type. Increased use could result in pressures on wilderness, remote and back country values. (DOC 2006a, p. 128)

There are a variety of ecological management issues for remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland National Park (such as the threat of invasive species to indigenous flora and fauna). Wilderness in New Zealand is, however, primarily a recreational concept, and this thesis is concerned with the social values and experiences associated with wilderness. For this reason, only management issues related to recreational use of, and the social values of wilderness will be discussed here.

73 A number of concerns about the proposal were raised during the park plan submissions process, and as a result, a separate consultation process regarding the appropriateness of the proposal has to take place before a decision can be made (Interview: Marie Long, DOC).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1: Remote and wilderness settings in Fiordland National Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remote Experience Settings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recreation opportunities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Primary purpose is to provide recreation opportunities for skilled, self-reliant visitors in a relatively unmodified natural environment. Values such as remoteness and natural quiet will be protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Most of the Park is managed to maintain and protect remote recreation experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management objectives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– To manage all remote visitor settings for low impact recreation opportunities distant from high use areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– The following key attributes will be protected:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– A predominance towards self-reliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Few encounters with other visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Small party sizes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Relatively free of recreation facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Access is generally non-mechanised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Away from the sights and sounds of human influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Manage existing tracks, routes and huts in accordance with the recreation opportunities review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Manage visitor numbers rather than harden or expand sites or facilities in response to adverse effects from increased use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Keep recreation facility development and tourism operations to a minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– All facilities will be basic, with huts having a maximum capacity of 16 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Concession activities must be consistent with the visitor setting objectives of this section and other national park values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– DOC will advocate that aircraft operators recognise and respect the wilderness area values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Management will be in accord with the Wilderness Policy 1985</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: modified from DOC 2006*
In the late 1990s, two prominent New Zealand wilderness researchers stated that there were ‘few threats to the integrity of New Zealand’s wilderness’ because of its ‘extreme remoteness; sustained difficulty of access; low demand pressures; regulations that are in place; and the focus of management on providing more services for front-country visitors’ (Cessford & Reedy 1997, p. 49). The authors concluded:

The only major issues that may affect how some wilderness areas are valued in the future relate to general ecological sustainability, the intrusive potential of aircraft overflights… apart from these aircraft effects, and given current management practices and recreation trends, no other major types of recreation intrusion are anticipated (p. 50)

More than a decade has passed since these comments were made, however, and a number of issues have gained more prominence in remote and wilderness areas – in particular the growing visitor use of conservation land (and the resulting social impacts on existing visitors), and the increase in motorised transport to these areas. Several key management issues that may pose a threat to wilderness values in Fiordland in the future are identified in the Draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan and are listed in Table 5.2. One of the key roles of park managers is to ensure that these issues do not adversely affect traditional recreation opportunities. This is achieved through the use of management strategies and planning mechanisms discussed earlier in this chapter.

Table 5.2: Wilderness management issues in Fiordland National Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A growing demand for air access to remote and wilderness locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An increase in aircraft overflights and landings to remote areas and areas surrounding wilderness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The increasing popularity of motorised jet boat access to remote areas – leading to noise impacts and conflict between different types of visitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘significant possibility of a growth of tourism activities’ – particularly in enclaves of private land within the Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The difficulties of monitoring commercial use of remote and wilderness areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing international visitor use of remote areas such as the Dusky Track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing visitation to historic sites in the Fiords – such as those in the Southern Sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The possibility of crowding, conflict and displacement as visitor numbers to certain sites increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lack of existing research into visitor use of remote and wilderness areas of the Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The legislative challenges to restricting access to remote and wilderness areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of these issues were elaborated on in interviews with key wilderness professionals. Their views have been included here.

Any attempt to restrict access to conservation land in New Zealand is extremely difficult because the current protected area legislation is founded on the country’s egalitarian principles of free access, and states that access to public conservation land should be free to everyone.
5.4 Tourism activities in remote and wilderness areas of the Park

Tourism (and in particular, international tourism) to Fiordland National Park is increasing, and is predicted to continue to do so in the future (DOC 2006a). As noted in section 5.2.3, international visitor use of the Park has grown significantly in the past decade, and the demand for recreation and tourism concessions in the Park has also risen significantly in the past few decades (ibid.). A recent report on nature-based tourism in New Zealand (Ministry of Tourism 2009c) noted that, in 2008, Fiordland was the third most popular area visited by international visitors to New Zealand (after Auckland and Rotorua) and that 97 per cent of all international tourists to Fiordland participated in nature-based activities. Tourism can have a significant impact on wilderness values. It is therefore important to describe the current situation with regards to tourism in remote and wilderness areas of the Park.

As explained in Chapter Two, commercial tourism can only take place on conservation land under certain conditions and with a concession from the Department of Conservation. This is to ensure that use is compatible with the area’s management objectives. The Mainland Southland – West Otago Conservation Management Strategy (DOC 2000) gives some broad guidance on the management of concessions in remote and wilderness areas in Fiordland. The key points are listed in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: CMS guidance for concessions management in remote and wilderness areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concessions must be compatible with the recreation opportunities identified with each landscape unit and must not adversely affect natural and historic resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concession operations must not detract from other visitors’ use and enjoyment, which may mean limiting the number of operators in some areas – particularly where opportunities being provided are at the remote/wilderness end of the spectrum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of remote and wilderness areas by tourism concession operators may ‘threaten’ the recreation opportunities provided by ‘diluting the wilderness experience of those other users’. Tourism operations also have the potential to ‘push back the frontiers of wilderness by encouraging use in otherwise isolated areas’ (p. 117)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Air access is a particular curse to those people who want to use wilderness or remote areas without the intrusion of mechanised transport’ (p. 112)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modified from DOC 2000

The Draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan contains more specific guidelines about concession operations within the Park. Section 5.4 notes that ‘a wide range of commercial recreation and tourism activities take place within the Park’, and that ‘proposals for more are expected’ (p. 265). In line with the Management Strategy, the plan states that concessions must not detract from other visitors’ use and enjoyment of the Park, and that concession
operations may have to be limited in remote and wilderness areas. The difficulties associated with anticipating the kinds of proposals that may be made for commercial tourism services are highlighted. In light of this, the plan states that concessions will only be granted if they are consistent with the objectives for the visitor setting and the particular place in question (discussed further below). Finally, the plan notes that a ‘cautious’ approach will be taken to concessions management where ‘the impacts of increasing visitor numbers to a place are unknown’ (p. 267).

Partly in response to some of the criticisms levelled at the current concessions system (see section 2.7.2), the Draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan contains some very specific guidelines about commercial operations within the Park, and provides a more strategic direction for concession allocation. Section 5.3 of the plan contains detailed guidelines about concessions management in each type of visitor setting. (There are also guidelines for particular locations within these settings, but given the level of detail included, it was not seen to be appropriate to include them in this section). The general guidelines for such activities in Wilderness and Remote experience settings are summarised in Table 5.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wilderness Areas</th>
<th>Remote Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concession activities should only be authorised if they are clearly consistent with the wilderness visitor setting objectives and other national park values</td>
<td>Recreation and tourism facility development should be kept to a minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The following restrictions should be imposed on recreation/tourism concessions:</td>
<td>Unless provided for elsewhere in this plan, concessionaires should be restricted to a maximum of one party per week, and party size should not exceed seven people (including guides)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Limited to a maximum party size of seven (including guides)</td>
<td>No more than five concessions for guiding activities off formed tracks should be granted for each of the remote visitor settings (excluding guided hunting, fishing and kayaking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o No day trips permitted</td>
<td>Additional restrictions on the frequency of trips may also be applied to manage the likely number of encounters with other parties. These will differ, depending on the type of activity and existing use levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o No more than five concessions for each of the wilderness areas</td>
<td>Specific provisions apply for kayaking operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Not more than ten trips per annum for each wilderness area</td>
<td>Guided hunting and fishing will be considered on a case by case basis, but should be subject to maximum of one party per week, and a maximum party size of three people (including guides)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Only one guided party per wilderness area at any given time</td>
<td>Commercial boating operations (except kayaks) should have a maximum vessel capacity of 12 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Guided hunting and fishing will be considered on a case by case basis, but should be subject to maximum of one party per week, and a maximum party size of three people (including guides)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summarised from DOC 2006a, section 5.3
At present, commercial use of remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland National Park is relatively low, but there are still a number of companies with concessions to conduct commercial tourism activities. There are currently 64 authorised concessionaires permitted to conduct activities in remote areas and 24 with concessions to operate in wilderness areas (M. Rodd, personal communication 1st May 2007). The majority of concessions are for guided walks and guided hunting or fishing. Other concession activities in these areas include scenic flights, guided kayaking and boat cruises. A list of current tourism concession agreements for remote and wilderness areas of the Park is provided in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Tourism concessions in remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland National Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity type</th>
<th>Number of companies with a concession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remote Areas</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided walks/mountaineering and nature walks</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided fishing/hunting</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruises/charter boats</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided kayaking</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft landings</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diving</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jet boat rides</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main activity type not evident</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wilderness Areas</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided walks/mountaineering and nature walks</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided fishing/hunting</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruises/charter boats</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided kayaking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft landings</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main activity type not evident</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: M. Rodd, personal communication 1st May 2007

5.4.1 No more commercial tourism in wilderness

During the time that this research was being undertaken, a proposal by the New Zealand Conservation Authority to allow no more commercial tourism in wilderness areas in Fiordland National Park was accepted by the Department of Conservation and the Southland Conservation Board, and was written into the new National Park Plan (DOC 2008c). This was

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76 Although scenic over-flights do not require a Department of Conservation concession, any take-offs and landings within the park do.
the first time that such a proposal had been actively written into a park plan in New Zealand, and it may set a precedent for future park plans and management strategies (Interview: Marie Long, Department of Conservation). The rationale behind this decision was a belief that commercial groups ‘do not meet the wilderness ideals of self-sufficiency and self-reliance embodied in the Wilderness Policy’ (Interview: Mike Crozier, New Zealand Conservation Authority) and also have the potential to change the nature of wilderness areas through the increasing regularity of their trips (Interview: Marie Long, Department of Conservation). The decision also reflected a desire to implement the Wilderness Policy in the Department of Conservation’s statutory documents (ibid.). A key point to note is that this decision was based on anecdotal evidence about the nature of tourism in wilderness, and its compatibility (or lack of) with the wilderness ideal: ‘there has been no specific research done into whether these assertions are true’ (ibid.). The findings presented later in this thesis represent the first (and only) set of New Zealand data on this subject.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented information on the physical characteristics, human history and visitor use of Fiordland National Park – the case study site for this research. Fiordland National Park is managed by the Department of Conservation, and is renowned for its outstanding natural character and wilderness values. The key management documents governing the use of the Park highlight the importance of its remote and wilderness qualities, noting that they are significant on a global scale. As such, the majority of the Park is zoned ‘Remote’ or ‘Wilderness’, and is primarily managed to provide remote recreation opportunities for experienced visitors in a quiet and unmodified environment. In recent times, however, the Park has become an extremely popular location for outdoor and nature-based/wilderness recreation. As a result, visitor numbers have been increasing, and this is potentially causing pressure on remote and wilderness areas. Unfortunately, due to an absence of accurate visitor use data, the extent and full implications of this increasing use is unclear.

The number of commercial tourism activities in the Park has also been growing. As noted in Chapter Three, this has caused significant controversy in other areas of New Zealand public conservation land, and so it is likely that any major increase in tourism in Fiordland will be met with resistance from certain sectors of the population. Tourism activities have the potential to undermine the wilderness values associated with the Park. Given the importance accorded to these qualities in the Management Plans and Strategies, this could pose a dilemma for managers in the future. The recent decision to restrict commercial tourism in wilderness
areas of the Park reflects an awareness of the significant value of Fiordland’s wilderness, and
demonstrates a managerial commitment to protecting the Park’s current wilderness values.
Contemporary wilderness users’ interpretations of these wilderness values is the subject of
investigation in the later stages of this thesis.

In the next chapter, I present the methods used in this research, and discuss the various
benefits and reasons for the choice of such an approach.
Chapter 6

Approach and methods

6.1 Introduction

In order to investigate the meaning of New Zealand wilderness to the people who visit these areas, I used personal research diaries, in-depth interviews and a variety of secondary data sources. This chapter describes the research methods and approach used in my study. It is divided into six parts. Section 6.2 outlines some of the main methods reported in the wilderness literature, and discusses some of the methodological challenges faced by contemporary wilderness researchers. Section 6.3 then introduces the approaches used in this study, describes these methods, and explains why they were chosen. Section 6.4 explains how the methods were adopted, and describes the techniques used in collecting and analysing the data. Sections 6.5 and 6.6 outline the limitations of the method and the ethical considerations respectively.

6.2 Existing wilderness research

As noted in Chapter Four, there has been a general move away from descriptive wilderness studies, towards more experience-based and qualitative research, employing the use of multiple methods (Borrie & Birzell 2001). Experience-based approaches focus on the nature of the experience as it is happening. This involves directly asking visitors to describe their experience (i.e. by responding to questions at multiple points during their trip) rather than to evaluate particular aspects of it at a specific point in time (ibid.). Qualitative approaches aim to understand social phenomena within their natural context. They provide a closer examination of the multiple meanings that people have for wilderness and enable unique elements of the wilderness experience to be captured that may otherwise be overlooked by traditional survey methods. Fredrickson & Anderson (1999) used a variety of qualitative techniques to examine aspects of the wilderness experience in two wilderness areas of the United States and concluded that:

It is unmistakable that additional qualitative enquiry can surely enrich and enhance the current body of knowledge about person-place interactions and the wilderness experience.  

(p. 38)

Recent studies that have used qualitative and multiple methods to explore the complexities of wilderness and outdoor recreation experiences include Dawson et al. (1998); Fredrickson (1998); Heintzman (2002); Patterson et al. (1998); Schroeder (2002) and Straker (2005). Findings from qualitative studies are not, however, always accepted by the wider academic
community (Borrie & Birzell 2001) or protected area managers\(^{77}\). Because of this, it has been suggested that qualitative methods are most useful for identifying emergent issues which can then be measured or examined with quantitative research, or other qualitative methods – the multiple methods approach (ibid.). This approach has been successfully adopted by several wilderness researchers in the past decade (see, for example Arnould & Price 1993; Watson \textit{et al.} 2003).

Underlying any programme of research are also specific challenges related to factors such as the logistics, timing and location of the study. Some of the key challenges facing wilderness researchers are outlined in the following section.

\section*{6.2.1 Methodological challenges}

Conducting research in a wilderness setting is fraught with challenges (Ewert & McAvoy 2000), and there is a general agreement that collecting primary data from wilderness users can prove extremely difficult (Espiner 1995; Ewert & McAvoy 2000; Higham 1996; Lucas & Oltman 1971). Many of the wilderness studies reviewed devote a large proportion of their methods section to discussing these challenges. The fundamental nature of wilderness (as a place where one can escape the restrictions of society) makes undertaking any form of research difficult, because it is likely to intrude on the visitor experience. To compound this, wilderness visitors are often few in number, and spread over a large area, which makes contacting them problematic. Researchers over the past few decades have devised ways to overcome many of these challenges but there are still some fundamental methodological issues of which to be aware. The main challenges have been summarised by Ewert & McAvoy (2000)\(^{78}\).

First, the wilderness \textit{environment} poses a challenge. Wilderness by definition is remote and inaccessible, and so attempting to carry data collection instruments (such as tape recorders, pens and paper, clipboards) into such areas can prove very problematic. In addition, changeable weather conditions and rough terrain mean that travelling with the survey equipment can be difficult, and equipment may become wet or damaged in the process.

Second, most wilderness visitors (especially independent visitors) travel in small groups or alone, which means that it is not easy to generate representative samples. Third, the \textit{logistics} of wilderness trips pose a challenge to researchers. Visits are often unstructured, with no fixed

\(^{77}\) Some of the reasons for this lack of acceptance amongst protected area managers have been discussed in Chapter Four.

\(^{78}\) The challenges outlined by Ewert & McAvoy (2000) related specifically to organised groups in wilderness settings. Given that the current study is focusing on independent wilderness visitors, some of the factors were modified to fit the context.
route or itinerary. Wilderness visitors typically value the freedom and flexibility offered by such a trip, and may change their plans on a daily basis. In addition, they are often spread over a wide geographical area and can be very difficult to locate. A good example of this issue is the research undertaken by Higham (1996). He spent fourteen days administering surveys in a remote area of Stewart Island, New Zealand, and only came into contact with twelve visitors - ten of whom returned completed surveys. A final challenge faced by researchers is how to avoid *intruding* on a person’s wilderness experience. As noted earlier, many people choose to undertake such trips to escape from aspects of everyday life, and so may be unwilling to take part in the research because it would detract from their experience. The current study overcame these limitations through the use of innovative methods which are described in section 6.4.

### 6.3 Methodological approach

This section describes the two main methodological *approaches* that were employed in this study. These are the qualitative approach and the case study approach.

#### 6.3.1 The qualitative approach

Qualitative research has been used in the social sciences since the early 1900s (Denzin & Lincoln 1994), however, its popularity has increased rapidly in the last 25 years (Winchester 2005). There are three main types of qualitative research: the oral (primarily interview-based), the textual (creative, documentary and landscape) and the observational (Hay 2000).

Qualitative research is concerned with the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals, and with understanding social phenomena within their natural context. Underlying the methods is a belief that individual experiences cannot necessarily be generalised through statistical analysis. Hence, qualitative methods tend to emphasise multiple meanings and interpretations rather than seeking a ‘correct’ explanation for an event or situation (*ibid.*).

Qualitative research focuses on depth rather than breadth of information, and takes an inductive approach to the development of theory. Emerging data, rather than pre-existing theories, are used to develop patterns that help to explain social situations (Simmons & Berno 1995).

Qualitative methods differ from quantitative in their theoretical bases, processes and outcomes (Simmons & Berno 1995). Unlike quantitative research methods, qualitative sampling techniques seek information from specific groups and sub-groups in the population and, as such, produce subjective data. The nature of qualitative methods also means that they
tend to be intensive and time-consuming, and necessitate the use of small samples. As a result, qualitative data, have less generalisability than quantitative data, but have a greater capacity for understanding the complexities of social phenomena. In 1995, Moore noted that:

The systematic use of qualitative methods is rare … and yet their potential for producing theoretical insights is significant. Analyses of the rich meanings recreationists bring to their activities and places is a notable omission from current understandings of outdoor recreation behaviour. Yet, ultimately it is only through such analyses that outdoor recreation can be fully understood. (p. 85)

Although the use of qualitative research methods has become more popular amongst outdoor recreation researchers since 1995, there is still a feeling amongst some managers and academics that qualitative research is not ‘real research’, and that only facts and figures generated through quantitative experiments or survey-based research are credible enough to be used in policy and planning.

The aim of the current study was to investigate the complexities of the New Zealand wilderness experience; to understand what people value about wilderness, and to explore how these values might be affected by a variety of factors occurring both within and outside wilderness. Wilderness is a subjective concept, and individual interpretations of wilderness (and potential influences on it) are invariably complex and multi-faceted. The complexities that are embodied in a qualitative approach reflect the idea that wilderness in itself is multifarious. It is for these reasons that qualitative methods were deemed appropriate for this study.

The approach chosen was inductive rather than deductive, because I did not want my research findings to be constrained from the outset by a particular theory or idea. Instead, theory was developed as the data were analysed, allowing the data and study respondents to ‘show me the way’. Glaser & Strauss (1967) note that this can be a very successful way of understanding social situations, but that theory developed in this way must be grounded in empirical data. This idea of researcher subjectivity and reflexivity will be discussed in section 6.5.

There were also practical and logistical reasons for choosing a qualitative approach (rather than a quantitative survey approach) for this study. First, Fiordland National Park (the chosen study site) covers a vast area, with multiple entry and exit points, meaning that it would have been very difficult to survey participants during their trip. Because of this (and the small numbers of wilderness users) response rates were likely to be very low, which would have necessitated an extremely lengthy survey period in order to generate reliable quantitative data.
And second, based on existing knowledge of this visitor group, it was felt that the presence of a surveyor may have been very intrusive to participants.

### 6.3.2 The case-study approach

A case study is a detailed analysis of a particular situation, person or group (Colorado State Education Guides 2006). The aim is to understand as much as possible about a particular situation. Case studies are the preferred method when the researcher wants to know ‘how’ and ‘why’ a situation is as it is, and where there is a contemporary focus on a real life context (*ibid*). By focusing on a particular person, group or institution, the case study approach allows a subject to be examined in greater depth and insight than with other methods (Machlis & Field 1984). This type of research takes place in a natural setting, and aims to provide a more holistic interpretation of the phenomena in question.

The case study approach was chosen for this research primarily because it was not feasible to undertake such a study on a larger scale. By focusing on one particular national park, it was felt that it would be possible to obtain a broad overview of the meanings and values of New Zealand wilderness, whilst also gathering important place-specific information about Fiordland National Park. Yin (2003) noted that case studies are useful when there is a need to understand complex social phenomena within a real life context, and Kappelle (2001) stated that the case study approach is appropriate when the phenomenon is worth studying in its own context, rather than how it relates to other phenomena. Both of these criteria are met by the current study. Wilderness experiences are inherently complex social phenomena, and occur within a real life context. Moreover, people’s experiences in (and views about) wilderness are unique to each protected natural area, and the focus of this study is on describing and understanding these experiences in the context of Fiordland.

As will be discussed in Chapter Ten, respondents frequently mentioned aspects of their experiences which may have been specific to Fiordland. This does not, however, mean that the study has no wider significance. Rather it emphasises the importance of the characteristics of the place in determining the types of wilderness experiences that people have. Further, many of these discussions highlighted the strong links between respondents’ views of wilderness and New Zealand’s unique cultural and political history. This assured me that the findings are likely to be applicable to most wild areas in the country, and that the broader ideas and concepts presented in Chapters Ten and Eleven will be relevant for other countries with similar cultural backgrounds. Although various other national parks could have been
selected as case studies for this project, there were a number of reasons why Fiordland National Park was chosen. These are outlined next.

6.3.3 Reasons for site selection

1. Department of Conservation research needs
As noted in Chapter One, this study initially began as applied research for the New Zealand Department of Conservation’s Southland Conservancy. The primary factor influencing the choice of study site was therefore the Department’s research needs. Managers lacked information about users of remote and wilderness areas, and required this to inform the Fiordland National Park Plan. I was working for the Department of Conservation at the time, and was asked to design and undertake a research project with the objective of understanding the Fiordland wilderness experience, including visitor characteristics, motivations, expectations and satisfactions, and any factors that may have an impact on this experience. The overall aim of the project was to gather information that would help with recreation and visitor management in Fiordland. When I left the Department of Conservation several months later to return to university, I came to an agreement with Lincoln University and the Department that I would continue with the research project and incorporate it into my thesis. The time, resources and specific management requirements therefore were major considerations when deciding on the method for the first set of primary data collection\(^{79}\), and the study site.

2. Wilderness character of the Park
Another major reason for choosing Fiordland for this study was because of its wilderness character. The primary study objective was to explore the New Zealand wilderness experience, and Fiordland National Park is renowned for its wilderness character. Fiordland is internationally recognised as one of the world’s great wilderness areas (DOC 2006a), and a large proportion of the Park is managed to provide traditional remote and wilderness recreation opportunities. For this reason, it was a very appropriate area in which to conduct such a study.

3. Variety of activity types
Fiordland was also regarded as a suitable study site because of the diversity of recreational opportunities that it provides. Rather than simply focusing on one particular type of recreational activity (such as tramping) as many of the previous New Zealand outdoor

\(^{79}\) The method used to collect the second set of primary data was chosen and undertaken after the research had become a doctoral project.
recreation studies have done, I anticipated that this study would incorporate a range of types of recreationists. Given its immense size, coastal location, and varied topography, Fiordland caters for an extremely wide range of activity types, including tramping, climbing, kayaking, fishing and hunting. I felt that it was important to include a range of activity types in order to obtain a thorough understanding of the wilderness experience.

6.4 Methods used in this study

This section describes how participants were selected, how the data collection and analysis were conducted, other data sources, and how the data were managed.

6.4.1 Data collection and analysis

The two main research methods selected for this study were research diaries and semi-structured interviews (the specifics of each method are detailed in section 6.4.2 and 6.4.3). Data collection for the diaries took place whilst I was working for the Department of Conservation. As such, the data collection process for the diaries is not regarded as part of the research for this thesis. However, it is still important to detail the methods used for two reasons. First, research diaries have rarely been used in New Zealand recreation research, and by documenting this method, I hope that other researchers may be able to successfully replicate this method in the future. Second, the reader needs to be aware of the methods used in order to fully understand the research findings and the broader context of the study.

Data collection for the diaries took place during the summer of 2004/2005. The diaries were transcribed during the month of June 2005 (before I started university). Analysis of the diaries was undertaken as part of the current thesis, and thus did not commence until November 2006. This process was preceded by a thorough re-reading of each of the transcripts in order to re-familiarise myself with the contents and themes. The interviews were conducted separately from the diary collection, after I had begun my thesis. All of the interviews were conducted between December 2006 and August 2007, after preliminary analysis of the diaries had taken place. Some interviews were transcribed during this time, and the remainder were transcribed once the fieldwork was finished. Analysis of the interviews took place during late 2007 and 2008, and then the results were combined with findings from the

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80 This meant that there was almost a two year gap between the trips when the diaries were written, and when participants were interviewed. Although this could have posed a problem (for example difficulties in recollecting the trip), I did not feel that it was an issue with the current study for two main reasons. First, many of the topics discussed in the interviews were not specific to the actual trip when the diaries were written (e.g. I was exploring respondents' views on wilderness in general), and second, the trips in question seemed to have made such a huge impression on respondents (perhaps partly the result of completing a diary each day), that no-one appeared to have any trouble recalling the events I wished to discuss. This is discussed further in section 6.5.
research diaries. Some analysis and reflection also took place during the field work stages while I was drawing up interview schedules and transcribing. This involved keeping field notes of any extra details that were not recorded during the interview; any methodological successes or difficulties; any personal or emotional experiences, and any key thoughts or ideas that sprung to mind during this time. The following sections detail the methods used – first, the research diaries and then the interviews.

6.4.2 Research diaries
Research diaries are defined as ‘an account produced specifically at the researcher’s request, by an informant or informants’ (Bell 1998, p. 72). Research diaries differ from personal private diaries in that they are designed for a particular research purpose, and are written in the knowledge that the content is for external consumption. Sorokin is often regarded as one of the pioneers of this method with the development of the ‘time-budget’ schedule in the 1930s, which involved respondents keeping a detailed log of how they allocated their time during the day (Corti 1993). More recently, qualitative studies (such as those looking at social networks, health, and other areas of social policy) have used a ‘standard day’ diary which focuses on a typical day or series of days in the life of an individual from a particular group or community (ibid.).

Diaries enable respondents to document their experiences and feelings without the intrusion of a researcher. They have become a popular research tool for economists, market researchers and social scientists who are interested in the way in which people spend their time, and how they feel about particular events and situations. Clark (1984, p. 30) notes that ‘diaries are particularly useful for gathering information about people while they are travelling to remote locations or when their travel prevents easy observation’. The current study explores individual wilderness visits. It is about understanding how people spend their time in wilderness, and how they develop meaning and values for these particular experiences and places. For this reason, I felt that asking people to document their activities and feelings each day through the use of a personal diary was a legitimate way to address the study’s research objectives.

Another important reason for choosing the diary method was that it gives participants the opportunity to record events as they happen. This approach assumes less cognitive processing on the respondent’s behalf and responses are believed to be more accurate and less influenced by bias (Borrie et al. 1998). There is a significant body of evidence which indicates that cognitive and psychological states (and therefore individuals’ responses) vary considerably
over the course of a recreation experience. (e.g. Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Hammitt 1980; Hull, Stewart & Yi 1992; Manfredo 1984; Stewart 1992; Williams, Ellis, Nickerson & Shafer 1988). In the case of the current study, I was concerned that there was a risk of missing out on important details if the chosen method was administered after the recreational experience – especially for visitors who were undertaking an extensive trip of more than one week. By asking participants to complete a diary entry for each day of their experience, I was confident that the chances of this happening would be minimised, and that the depth and detail of information obtained would be maximised.

The diary method can also help to overcome potential problems associated with collecting sensitive information through face-to-face contact (Elliott 1997). It can minimise bias by allowing respondents to complete the journals alone and in their own time, without the presence and/or influence of a researcher. I felt that this method would encourage participants to ‘open up’ more and, and provide an in-depth and personal account of their wilderness experiences.

**Diary design and format**
The diary design was based on guidelines in Corti (1993), and draws on a study which used personal narratives to examine the experience of commercial tourists to the Ross Sea region of Antarctica (Maher 2007). A copy of the ‘wilderness diary’ is included in Appendix 1. Diaries were A5 in size, and 31 pages long, with a plastic cover on the front and a stiff card back (Figure 6.1). They were given to participants with a ball point pen and a return postal envelope, and were sealed in a waterproof zip-lock bag. It was hoped that they would be robust enough to last for up to 14 days in the Park, and that the freepost envelope would encourage respondents to return the completed diaries for analysis after their trip.

The first three pages of the diary contained a brief introduction to the research, instructions for how to complete it and a photography consent form (for if respondents wished to include photographs in the information they returned to the researcher). Pages four to six comprised survey-type questions to gather basic quantitative visitor information (demographic details, trip type and so on). This provided some baseline data on the visitor group under study. The trip diary ran from page 7-26, with 2 pages per day (10 days in total), and ample space for visitors to write on the reverse sides if they wished. This section was the ‘heart’ of the research method, and sought to obtain respondents’ personal accounts of their Fiordland experience. The format was open, giving respondents the opportunity to write about anything they felt was important to them during that stage of their trip. A few cue questions were
offered each day as triggers or prompts (for example what did you enjoy about today? What did you dislike about today? Did anything unexpected happen today? Were you annoyed or disappointed with anything that happened today?). These acted as rough guidelines, but the overall aim was to encourage respondents to write freely and share as much information as they wished.

Figure 6.1: Wilderness trip diary

At the end of the diary, there was a ‘final impressions’ section containing eight questions that visitors were asked to complete once their trip was over. The aim of the questions was four-fold. First, to encourage respondents to reflect on and talk about their Fiordland experience (for example, what were the most memorable parts of your Fiordland experience? Which aspect of your trip did you find most rewarding?); second, to gather respondents’ views on specific issues of interest (i.e. was anything different to what you had expected? What characteristics should a wilderness experience have?); third, to provide an overall summary of each respondent’s experience in Fiordland; and fourth, to allow for a certain degree of comparative analysis.

Based on tips for improving co-operation in diary surveys in Corti (1993), an incentive was offered for taking part in the research. All participants who returned completed trip diaries were entered in a prize draw to win a Fairydown Adventure sleeping bag. I felt that this incentive would appeal to the wilderness visitor, and the company was well-regarded within
the outdoor recreation community. Participants’ names were removed from the trip diaries once the draw had taken place.

**Diary distribution**

The research was advertised in various locations around the Southland region and in Wilderness Magazine, The Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) bulletin and on the Department of Conservation website. A copy of the advertisement can be seen in Appendix 2, and a list of the outlets used to publicise the research is provided in Appendix 3. An individual from each of the outlets (generally the manager or person in charge) was selected and personally contacted by the researcher to ask if they would be willing to help. Staff from each outlet or visitor centre were personally briefed by the researcher on how to recruit participants, and were provided with a comprehensive set of instructions to follow (these can be seen in Appendix 4) and a box of research diaries to hand out to eligible participants. In order to take part in the research, visitors had to meet the following criteria:

- Be planning a visit to a remote or wilderness area (as defined in the Draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan [DOC 2006a])
- Be visiting for more than two days
- Be intending to travel under their own steam (i.e. without the use of motorised transport) during their visit.

The instructions made it clear who was eligible to participate in the research to ensure that only ‘wilderness users’ participated. People who saw the research advertised in one of the publications were asked to contact the Department of Conservation via email or to collect a research diary from one of the outlets. An email address (fnpsurvey@doc.govt.nz) was created specifically to deal with enquiries regarding the project.\(^{81}\)

Response rates to the advertisements were mixed. The most popular place for recruiting participants was the Department of Conservation Visitor Centre in Te Anau. Other successful locations included the mountain radio and locator beacon outlets, the New Zealand Deer Stalkers Association and local recreation clubs. The Wilderness Magazine and FMC articles and the Department of Conservation web site advertisement did not generate as much interest as had been anticipated. This was possibly due to the lack of personal contact between participants and the recruitment personnel. The outdoor retail outlets had very limited success. An unexpected way of recruiting participants was the ‘snowballing’ technique, which

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\(^{81}\) The fact that the diaries were only explained (and had to be completed) in English meant that participation in this study was limited to individuals who could communicate (read and write) proficiently in English. This was an unavoidable limitation (given the time and budgetary constraints), but fortunately it did not deter a number of non-native speakers from taking part. The final sample of diaryists included six Germans, one Swiss, two Dutch, one Austrian, one Israeli and one Japanese.
involved people who knew about the research publicising it by word of mouth – generally to friends and family.

Distribution of the diaries took place over a four month period from January 5th – April 30th 2005. This period covered a large part of the peak summer season for tramping, the peak hunting season (the roar\textsuperscript{82}) and the Easter break. Completed diaries were returned in the freepost envelope provided. All diaries were received by 31\textsuperscript{st} May 2005.

**Diary Response**

A total of 68 completed diaries were returned, but one of these could not be used because the respondent did not meet the participation criteria. Information on study participants who completed diaries is included in Chapter Seven. Unfortunately it is not possible to give a precise indication of the response rate, as some distributors did not keep accurate records of the number of diaries they handed out. The final sample included a variety of activity types, ages and nationalities, although it was heavily dominated by males (85 per cent males compared to 15 per cent females). This, however, is indicative of the particular sub-section of the outdoor recreation population (see description of ‘Remoteness Seekers’ in section 2.5.2) and I did not see it as a cause for concern.

There was a huge variation in the content, length and style of what was written in the diaries. Some respondents paid no attention to the prompts and simply wrote freely about whatever they wished – often up to three or four pages per day. Others followed the prompts religiously, answering each question in order every day. Some people simply documented what they did each day, with little reference to feelings or emotions, while others described in great detail how specific events or interactions made them feel, and how their time in Fiordland related to previous experiences and other aspects of their personal lives. A number of diarists even discussed how the experience had caused them to change their perspective on life. Some asked for copies of the diaries for their own personal records, and many included photographs for inclusion in the project write-up. Overall, the response was very encouraging, and the amount and depth of information gathered far exceeded my expectations.

**Diary Analysis**

I transcribed each of the diaries, which enabled me to familiarise myself with the contents. During the first stage of the analysis, the transcripts were coded into categories and themes,

\footnote{The ‘roar’ is a colloquial term for the mating season, when stags ‘bugle’ or ‘roar’ to attract hinds (and then defend those that they successfully attract). During this time, male deer are more active and less cautious than usual which makes them easier to hunt. The roar takes place during March to the end of April in New Zealand.}
and issues were identified. A full list of the themes and categories generated through the diary coding process can be seen in Appendix 5. The longest and most complex diary was coded first, which provided a useful baseline list of categories that was added to when coding the other diaries. To ensure that no important details were overlooked, I coded every potential theme at this stage, with the aim of reaching ‘theoretical saturation’ (where no new significant categories or concepts were emerging). I deliberately chose this inductive approach to coding, based on the Grounded Theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss 1967), where theories, concepts and categories ‘emerge’ from the data, rather than being predetermined by the literature. Once this was complete, a definition was drawn up for each code, including examples from the transcripts where appropriate. I then coded the remaining diaries and defined any new themes that emerged in the same way. An example of a coded diary page is provided in Appendix 6. Participants’ demographic characteristics and trip details (location, duration, type of transport, main activity etc.) were entered into a spreadsheet. This information was used to identify any major variations between visitor groups within the study sample (for example differences between hunters and trampers or New Zealanders and overseas visitors).

**Reporting of diary data**

Diary respondents are all referenced in the thesis by the word ‘Diary’, followed by the specific number allocated to their original research diary. For example: (Diary 353). Although the original numbers were kept for those who returned for an interview, I felt that it was important to distinguish between diary and interview data because of the differences in the approach and timing of the method. The reporting of the interview data is explained in the next section which describes the interview methods (employed after primary analysis of the diaries was complete).

**6.4.3 Semi-structured and in-depth interviews**

A qualitative approach requires researchers to gather the richest possible data to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question (Blumer 1969). As such, interviews were chosen as a way of adding to the richness of the data contained in the diaries. An additional reason for choosing to undertake interviews was because engaging in face to face interaction is regarded as one of the most effective methods of obtaining qualitative information - it enables the researcher to ‘participate in the minds of the settings’ participants’ (Lofland & Lofland 1995, p. 17).

An interview can be defined as ‘a face to face verbal interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another
person or persons’ (Maccoby & Maccoby 1954, p. 499). The aim of qualitative research interviews is to understand the world from the respondent’s point of view - to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, and to uncover their lived world (Kvale 1996). This study is about understanding individual experiences and beliefs about wilderness. It required an in-depth exploration of the views of individuals about this topic. This could not have been done entirely through the use of research diaries because there would have been no interaction with the researcher, and so there would have been no way to validate or confirm the information contained in the diaries, or to probe for additional information on subjects of interest. For this reason, I considered it necessary to gather additional information from a selection of respondents to support the findings from the diaries. I felt that interviews were an appropriate way of doing this because they allow the researcher to address specific issues, whilst also giving respondents the opportunity to discuss topics that are important to them in more detail. Interviews also enable the researcher to ask the same questions in different ways in order to explore issues more thoroughly.

Successful qualitative enquiry requires that researchers use a variety of data sources and collection techniques, and view their research questions from differing points of view in order to obtain the clearest possible picture of the social setting (Blumer 1969). Because of this, I felt that it would be useful to gain a managerial and a commercial perspective of the issues in question, and so I approached a selection of tourism operators who worked in remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland National Park and a number of individuals with managerial responsibility and/or influence in wilderness management for interview. Blumer (1969) also highlights the importance of the selection process when choosing potential participants: ‘One such [well informed] person is worth a hundred others who are merely unobservant participants’ (p. 41). Unlike the self-selection method for the research diaries, I was able to carefully select my participants for the professional interviews (discussed later in this section).

Interviews can range from rigidly-structured discussions where all of the questions are pre-determined and standardised, to completely unstructured interviews, where the content and direction of the conversation is largely determined during the interview by the interviewer and the interviewee (Dunn 2005). A semi-structured interview lies midway between these two extremes. The researcher has a list of themes to cover in the interview, but there is no fixed order to the questions, and the structure and content is likely to vary greatly depending on the knowledge, ideas, attitude and willingness to talk of the person being interviewed (Valentine 1997). I felt that semi-structured interviews were appropriate for the current study in order to ensure that the important issues were covered, but also to allow enough flexibility for each
interview to be tailored to the individual. An in-depth format was chosen as the most appropriate because the aim was to understand, rather than simply describe people’s experiences in Fiordland. This involved spending a significant amount of time on particular topics, and using probing techniques, or re-phrasing the questions in order to obtain a thorough and detailed response.

**Participant selection**

Interviews were conducted with a selection of recreationists who had completed research diaries during 2004/2005. Diary participants had been asked to indicate whether they were happy to be contacted for a follow-up interview when they completed the ‘final impressions’ section of the diary. The Department of Conservation individually contacted all of the participants who had answered ‘yes’ to this question, and who currently lived in New Zealand. A total of twenty four people were still happy to take part, and were approached by the researcher, requesting an interview. Of these twenty four, six were unavailable at the time when I was in the area, resulting in a total of eighteen interview participants.

Tourism operators with current concessions to take visitors to remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland National Park (as defined in the Draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan) were also identified and approached for interview. I contacted the Department of Conservation’s Southland Conservancy for a list of operators with concessions. Representatives from six of these were approached for interview, based on several criteria. Promotional material for each operator was obtained from the company web site or from the local tourism office, and informal discussions were held with members of the Department of Conservation’s Southland Conservancy. Selection was partly based on the company’s reputation (i.e. whether they were reputed to be knowledgeable, helpful and informative), their length of time in operation in Fiordland, and whether they used the term ‘wilderness’ to promote their products. I deliberately selected a range of different activity types and operators who had been working in Fiordland for some time so that I was assured that they would provide a useful contribution to my research. In addition, I interviewed the manager of the Regional Tourism Organisation because numerous key informants believed that this individual could provide an extremely informed perspective on many of the issues in question.

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83 As will be explained later in this section, one additional interviewee was recruited through the ‘snowballing’ method, making a total of nineteen recreationist interviews.
I also interviewed individuals with professional involvement in New Zealand wilderness management (and in particular, Fiordland National Park). I called this group of interviewees ‘wilderness professionals’. The inclusion of information from this group provided important contextual and background data for my thesis, as well as enriching the existing data. These participants were identified by drawing up a list (in consultation with the Department of Conservation – the key management authority) of key stakeholders in the Fiordland National Park Management Planning process, and managers with responsibility for either wilderness research of wilderness planning and management. Those identified were contacted personally for interview, and all agreed to participate.

**Interview procedure**

Interviews were conducted with wilderness recreationists, tourism operators and wilderness professionals. Participation was voluntary, and each interview lasted from 45 minutes to two hours in length. Interviews were conducted in a location convenient to the participant. In the case of the recreationists, this was generally their home (respondents were based all over New Zealand), or in a public place such as a café. The representatives from tourism companies were interviewed in their offices in Te Anau or Manapouri. Wilderness professionals were interviewed in their respective offices, with the exception of the Southland Conservation Board representative, who was interviewed at his friend’s home in Christchurch. With the agreement of respondents, the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. I kept a field diary of important events or issues that came up in the interview, and noted down any challenges or successes that occurred, and important themes or issues to follow up on.

**Interview structure and format**

An interview schedule was used for each set of interviews (Appendices 7, 8 and 9), although the order of questions and length of time spent on each issue varied considerably between respondents. For recreationists, the questions were based around major themes which arose during the diary analysis (such as what are the key characteristics of wilderness? Do you feel that any of the traditional wilderness values are under threat? and what are your views on tourism in wilderness?), and specific questions or points that I wanted to clarify from each individual diary. For tour operators, interview questions focused on the types of activities and experiences provided by the company, the type of clientele they attracted, and their views on the future of wilderness tourism in New Zealand. Given the differing roles of the wilderness professionals involved in this research, the structure and content of each interview varied considerably. Key themes included, but were not limited to: the individual’s role with relation to (and knowledge of) wilderness management in New Zealand, their views on the current
state (and future prospects) of wilderness recreation in New Zealand, and whether they thought there were any major threats to existing wilderness values.

**Interview Response**

A total of nineteen wilderness recreationists, six tourism operators and seven wilderness professionals were interviewed during the period December 2006 – August 2007. Eighteen of the recreationists had completed diaries during the summer of 2004/2005, and one was an avid wilderness recreationist with an extensive knowledge of Fiordland who was recommended for interview by another respondent. A summary of information about these participants is provided in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Summary information about interviewees (recreationists)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID #</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Male/ Female</th>
<th>Trip location</th>
<th>Activity type</th>
<th>Length of trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>258</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Juno River</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>10 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Glaisnock Wilderness</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>7 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>067</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Freeman Burn</td>
<td>Tramping</td>
<td>6 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>321</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>1 x Female, 1 x Male</td>
<td>Dusky and South Coast Track</td>
<td>Tramping</td>
<td>6 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>247</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Glaisnock Wilderness</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>8 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>007</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Preservation Inlet</td>
<td>Kayaking</td>
<td>13 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Mount Napier/ Thompson Sound</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>8 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>061</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dusky Track</td>
<td>Tramping</td>
<td>8 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>995</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Glaisnock Wilderness</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>10 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Glaisnock Wilderness</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>8 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>323</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Kepler Mountains and beyond</td>
<td>Tramping</td>
<td>10 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>244</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Doon River</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>10 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Dusky Track</td>
<td>Tramping</td>
<td>7 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dusky Track</td>
<td>Tramping</td>
<td>7 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>068</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Freeman Burn</td>
<td>Tramping</td>
<td>6 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>195</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Glaisnock Wilderness</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>13 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>230</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Glaisnock Wilderness</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>8 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Glaisnock Wilderness</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>11 nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>055</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Variety of locations</td>
<td>Tramping/kayaking</td>
<td>Variety of trips</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All except one of the recreationists I interviewed were originally from New Zealand. Although it was not originally a goal of my thesis to specifically explore New Zealanders’ perceptions/values of wilderness as a distinct sub-section of my sample (i.e. separate to overseas visitors), this dominance of New Zealanders in the interview sample was a rather fortuitous occurrence, and provided the ‘essence’ of my final discussion. Details about the wilderness professionals can be seen in Appendix 10. Information about the tour operators who were interviewed is not provided because of the likely possibility of identifying them. In the final analysis and write-up, the wilderness participant data was considered sufficiently rich and detailed that the later interviews largely played a supporting role in the thesis.

Five of the tourism operators were based in Te Anau, and one in Manapouri. I spent two weeks in Te Anau conducting these interviews. The recreationists and wilderness professionals, however, lived in various places throughout New Zealand, which meant that a significant amount of travelling was required between interviews. I attempted to coordinate the interviews so that all of those people living in a particular area were interviewed during the same week. With the exception of two, all of the interviews were conducted with individuals. The two exceptions were a married couple who had travelled extensively together in Fiordland (including the trip during which the diary was completed), and requested to be interviewed together, and two professionals from the Department of Conservation’s Southland Conservancy (the Community Relations Manager and Concessions Supervisor) who felt that their collective input would be more informative than two separate interviews.

**Interview Analysis**

As with the diaries, I transcribed the interviews so that I could familiarise myself with the contents. Initially, each transcript was then coded, using the same categories as the diaries. Due to the extensive amount of rich and complex data generated through the interview process, however, many new themes and sub-themes were identified, and conversely, several of the original themes from the diary analysis required re-coding or merging with another category as their relative importance in the research findings became more apparent. A full list of the themes generated through the interview coding process is provided in Appendix 11 and an example of a section of coded interview can be seen in Appendix 12.

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84 This is largely due to the fact that the interviews were conducted two years after the original wilderness trip had taken place. By this point, all but one of the overseas respondents who had indicated that they were available for interview had left the country. This clearly affected the balance of nationalities represented in the interview sample, although as will be seen in Chapter Ten, this actually became a strength of the current study, because it enabled me to focus on the views of New Zealanders during later analysis. This then became the key to my whole thesis.
Two major topic areas were identified – these were ‘meanings and values of wilderness’ and ‘factors affecting wilderness’. These two themes are explored in detail in Chapters Eight and Nine. The third theme only manifested itself during the latter stages of the analysis (hence the significant amount of re-coding that was required). This was the topic of wilderness and New Zealand culture and identity. Data relating to this theme is presented in Chapter Ten. Within each of these topic areas, many other sub themes were identified. Some of these were practical themes (such as specific elements of the wilderness setting or types of activity that are considered appropriate in wilderness), whereas others were more experiential or socio-psychological (such as respondents’ interpretations of tourism). Individual participants’ experiences and beliefs were compared to those of others undertaking similar trips, and common themes were identified across all respondents. Although there was some diversity within respondents’ views on particular issues, the aim of this thesis was to search for commonalities and ideas that were similar across respondents. It was not desirable or possible to include every possible point of view on every possible issue. As noted by Glaser and Strauss (1967): It is not necessary ‘to provide a complete description [of a research topic], but to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behaviour’ (p. 30). Therefore, it is the most common themes identified across all respondents which form the bulk of my research findings.

**Reporting of interview data**

The interview process generated three distinct sets of data: the wilderness recreationists, the tourism representatives, and the wilderness professionals. Each group of interviewees is described differently in the thesis, as follows:

- **Wilderness recreationists** – referenced in the thesis by their first initial, followed by the individual code number on their original research diary. For example (J 253)
- **Tour operators** – referenced by TO (to indicate tour operator), followed by a specific code number allocated to them before the interview. For example (TO3)
- **Wilderness professionals** – identified by name, along with the organisation or company they represent. For example, (Interview: Chris Jacobs, Department of Conservation).

**6.4.4 Other data sources**

It was also necessary to use some secondary data sources to provide contextual information and supporting evidence for ideas contained in this thesis. My main sources for secondary data were: existing Department of Conservation and tourism publications and brochures; the internet and popular media (including magazines, newspapers and recreational club bulletins). Information about the management of Fiordland National Park, and about visitor use and
impacts in the Park was found in the Draft Fiordland National Park Management Plan (DOC 2006a), Southland Visitor Statistics (DOC 2005d), the Department of Conservation web site (www.doc.govt.nz) and the Mainland Southland–West Otago Conservation Management Strategy (DOC 2000). I also carried out internet searches and collected various tourism brochures for companies operating in remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland while undertaking my fieldwork. The aim of this was to explore the different images of wilderness that are portrayed to potential visitors. The topical (and at times controversial) issue of wilderness management generates popular interest (especially amongst outdoor recreationists, conservationists and the tourism industry). As a result, I discovered a number of newspaper and magazine articles and recreational club publications on New Zealand wilderness and issues related to wilderness management. Ideas contained in these were used to supplement my interview and diary data.

6.4.5 Data management
Analysis of both the diaries and interviews involved a detailed thematic analysis with the aid of ‘Nvivo’ software. I was initially sceptical about using software for qualitative research, fearing that it may reduce much of the rich and detailed information to numbers and generalisations. However, I found Nvivo to be of significant benefit to my study in terms of data management (especially given the amount of data and the number of times I had to code and re-code particular themes) and for ensuring an orderly, robust and transparent research process.  

6.5 Limitations of the method
As with any research, it is important to acknowledge the potential limitations of the method. These are the focus of this section.

Reflexivity and subjectivity
Qualitative data are heavily influenced by the social context within which the research design and analysis and data collection take place. Qualitative research is an interpretive and subjective exercise, and the researcher is intimately involved in the process. The diaries and interview schedules were designed by me, with a particular purpose in mind. The analysis and conclusions are, therefore, to a large extent, my own personal construction (for example how I interpreted what was said). Fielding & Fielding (1986) caution that one of the main sources of

85 This was particularly important as the findings are likely to be used by the Department of Conservation for management purposes.
bias in qualitative fieldwork is a ‘tendency to select field data to fit an ideal conception (preconception) of the phenomenon’ (p. 32), and Dey (1993) provides a similar warning:

> Because the data are voluminous, we have to be selective – and we can select out the data that doesn’t suit. Because the data are complex, we have to rely more on imagination, insight and intuition – and we can quickly leap to the wrong conclusions. (p. 222)

It was important to recognise the role that my position as a researcher, as a former Department of Conservation employee, as an avid outdoor recreationist and as a ‘foreigner’ in New Zealand may play in the research, and to attempt to minimise this. I did this by constantly scrutinising my research methods and by clearly documenting my thought processes as the analysis proceeded. Although I had an idea of what wilderness meant to some of the keen outdoor enthusiasts and conservationists I had encountered during my time in New Zealand (and to visitors to ‘wilderness’ areas in other countries), I was also aware that this topic had never been researched before in a New Zealand context and that much of the information I would be uncovering would be new and relatively unique in academic circles. For this reason, I do not feel that I had any real preconceptions about what I would find – indeed, I was somewhat surprised by several of the themes which rose to prominence during the analysis.

In addition, I feel that my interest in the outdoors and my (albeit fairly limited) knowledge of Fiordland (through working for the Department of Conservation) was much more of an advantage than a hindrance during the research process, as it provided me with an immediate point of discussion with my interviewees and I believe that this enabled me to obtain much richer and more ‘meaty’ data than would have been possible had I had no real interest in wilderness or the outdoors. Similarly, I feel that my position as a ‘foreigner’ (but one who has lived in New Zealand for some time), asking questions about New Zealand identity and New Zealanders’ views of overseas tourists put me in the advantageous position of being able to pose critical questions, and obtain blunt answers without the fear of offending my respondents, or them offending me in any great way. Overall, I feel that I was sufficiently aware of my position as a researcher to be able to minimise any potential sources of bias that could have influenced the study findings.

**Writing for a specific audience**

Research diaries are written specifically at the researcher’s request. From the outset, participants in the current study knew that the writing process was for external consumption, and so they may have been selective about the information they included. It is likely that some responses reflect an awareness of what the respondent wanted the researcher to read, rather
than what they truly felt. Several participants in my study demonstrated a strong awareness of the researcher by directly addressing me in their entries: ‘Sorry about my writing, it was very cold tonight…’ and ‘I think you already know what my answer to this question will be…..’ There were also several instances where entries had clearly been written with a specific agenda in mind: ‘I think that it is bloody stupid that DOC won’t let helicopters into these areas…’ However, this is simply the nature of qualitative research, and I would argue that, as long as the researcher is aware of this, then in fact it adds to the richness and depth of the data.

**Uniqueness of each experience**

Each diary and each interview represents the unique views of one individual during their specific Fiordland experience. The use of personal diaries may ‘run the risk of providing decontextualised and individualistic material … and hence may represent a very singular interpretation of events’ (Meth 2003, p. 199). However, both methods also revealed consensus on a number of issues, which corroborated and validated my research findings, and enabled me to draw out common themes and ideas from a variety of respondents. In addition, the goal of this study was to gain an understanding of the unique experiences and feelings of each individual participant, whilst also looking for commonalities between respondents, so this method was well-suited.

**Self-selection of participants**

Another limitation of the chosen methods is that participants were all self-selected and therefore were likely to have a particular interest in the research topic, or a desire to contribute to the study’s objectives. This could mean that a whole subset of the wilderness user population has been excluded from this analysis. Again, this is the nature of qualitative research. The aim was not to be representative of the whole user population, but to understand how individual recreationists evaluate their unique experiences in Fiordland National Park. It would not have been possible to sample the whole population of wilderness users because (as noted in Chapter Five) there is no existing data on who wilderness users are or where they go.

**Effort required from participants**

Writing a daily diary required significant time and effort on behalf of the participants, and there is a possibility that some may have ‘given up’ half way through the process, or completed sections of the diary retrospectively after their trip had finished. To minimise the chances of either of these scenarios occurring, I made sure that participants were aware of what was expected of them before they agreed to take part in the research and emphasised the
importance of completing the diaries each day. An incentive (in the form of a sleeping bag) was offered to encourage participants to complete the diaries and there was significant evidence (for example mud splashes, squashed sandflies, rain marks and rips) to assure me that the majority of diaries were completed on-site, each day.

**Intrusiveness of method**

One of the primary reasons given for seeking a wilderness experience is to ‘get away from it all’. As such, any research that is carried out whilst participants are undertaking their trip is likely to be somewhat intrusive. I believe, however, that the diary method was one of the least intrusive of the qualitative research methods I could have chosen for this study. This is because it does not require the presence of a researcher. The act of having to complete the diary each day may have been slightly cumbersome, but respondents were free to choose when they did this, thus further reducing the invasiveness of the method.

The interviews were not regarded as an intrusion on participants’ experiences either, because they took place after the trip had finished. There is, however, a possibility that some participants may have found the recording device slightly intrusive, and may have withheld certain information because of this. I did not feel that this was an issue during all except one of the interviews, as participants seemed very comfortable in conversation with me. The one exception to this was a particularly unresponsive hunter who spent the first half of the conversation giving monosyllabic answers, whilst glancing furtively at the recording device on the table in front of us. Despite having written some beautiful descriptions of his encounters with nature in his trip diary, he was reluctant to discuss any of these incidents with me during the interview. Once the interview had finished, however, he leant over and made sure that the recorder was switched off, and then proceeded to show me a whole series of photographs from his most recent trip to Fiordland. While describing many of those ‘magical’ moments that were documented in his diary, he told me about a particular morning when he and his friend were hunting on the tops and were both suddenly overcome by the majesty of the natural surroundings: ‘it was a really spiritual and moving experience; probably the closest I have ever felt to God… My hunting partner broke down in tears because he was so overwhelmed by the whole experience’ [quotation noted down, with respondent’s agreement, as he spoke]. This highlights the need to be aware of this issue, and to be willing to stop the recording device and revert to taking notes instead, if required.
Timing and location of method

Finally, it is important to be aware of the influence that the timing and location of the method can have on the research findings. As mentioned in section 6.4.2 (and as will be discussed in Chapter Eight) recreationists’ perceptions of certain elements of their trip can change considerably during the period between the actual trip and the post-trip interview. By the time I spoke to interviewees some time after their trip, many of the views expressed in their diaries had mellowed; they had had time to rationalise many of their earlier thoughts, and tended to convey more moderate opinions than the emotions felt during their trip.

Rather than view this as a weakness of the method, I believe this to be a particular strength of the combination of mixed methods chosen for this study. These observations highlight the fact that, with research conducted after the trip, respondents are likely to rationalise or minimise these challenges and make them seem less significant. The findings also emphasise the usefulness of an on-site method that is used during the experience, rather than a survey or interview administered afterwards, when things can be forgotten, or perceptions can change slightly. In the case of the present study, the diary was an invaluable method of recording the trials and tribulations that wilderness users have to go through as an integral part of the experience, and the interviews were a useful way of capturing post-trip recollections.

6.6 Ethical considerations

This research was conducted in accordance with commonly accepted ethical practices and the diary analysis and interviews were approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee. Participants were fully informed (both verbally and with a written information sheet) about what would be required of them before they agreed to take part in the study. Each diary was assigned a unique number so as to protect the anonymity of participants. The pages with names or contact details were removed from the transcripts and a secure file was kept that linked the code numbers back to the original informants.

Interviewees who had completed research diaries were initially contacted by the Department of Conservation to check whether they were still happy to be interviewed. I then contacted those who agreed to do so, and informed them about the study verbally. They were also given an information sheet (Appendix 13) and asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 14). I contacted tour operators and wilderness professionals by email and then by telephone. They were given a similar information sheet (Appendices 15 & 16) and asked to sign a consent
form before the interview took place (Appendix 17). As with the diaries, each interview transcript was assigned a unique number which linked it back to the respondent’s name. Those who had completed diaries kept the same number as the original diary. All recreationists and tour operators quoted in the written text were given pseudonyms. Comments from wilderness professionals were referenced by name unless they advised me otherwise. Maintaining confidentially and privacy was important in this study. Any information that may have identified wilderness participants or tour operators in the written thesis was excluded in order to ensure that they remained anonymous.

6.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has described the methodological approach used in this study, and the way in which the data were collected and analysed. The overall goal of the research was to explore meanings and values of wilderness for visitors to Fiordland. A qualitative approach was adopted because the research involved a detailed exploration of a social phenomenon which was invariably complex, ‘slippery’ and multi-faceted. It therefore required an approach that would be capable of dealing with such data. A case study approach was also chosen because it was not feasible to undertake such a study on a larger scale. Fiordland was selected as the study site for practical reasons, and also because it contains the largest expanse of New Zealand’s remaining ‘wilderness’ and was therefore seen as the perfect location for the research. Data was collected through the use of research diaries and semi-structured interviews with diarists, tour operators and wilderness professionals. This was supplemented by information from the Department of Conservation and tourism publications, websites and the popular press. This broad, extensive, multi-method approach was chosen in order to obtain the richest possible data about wilderness in New Zealand. This chapter concluded with a discussion of the limitations of the method (which included the self-selection of participants, researcher bias and the effort required from participants), and the ethical considerations.

In the first three chapters of this thesis, I introduced the concept of wilderness, its social and historical importance, and the relevant legislation. In Chapters Five and Six, I have described the research site and the methods used to investigate wilderness participants’ interpretations of their experiences. The next four chapters present the main findings from this research, theme by theme, followed by a final discussion. Chapter Seven presents quantifiable data about study respondents – such as who they are, where they went, and how long they went

86 Respondents were asked if they would like to see a copy of the interview transcript to check for understanding and to make any necessary corrections. Only one respondent asked to do so, and only a few minor corrections were made (primarily to improve comprehension of what he was trying to say).
for. Chapter Eight explores the meanings and values respondents attribute to New Zealand wilderness; Chapter Nine describes respondents’ interpretations of threats to wilderness, and Chapter Ten examines wilderness as a manifestation of New Zealand culture and identity. Finally, Chapter Eleven re-packs the findings presented in these four chapters through an integrative discussion of wilderness in New Zealand.
Chapter 7

Profiling the wilderness users

7.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of New Zealand wilderness comprises a multiplicity of overlapping, emergent and fluid elements. My challenge is to preserve a sense of this complexity, interrelatedness and movement while also, for heuristic purposes, highlighting the various dimensions of wilderness mentioned by my respondents. The next four chapters is my attempt to examine the individual components of this concept, and to ‘unpack’ these, while also maintaining a sense of the whole.

To begin, this chapter presents an overview of some of the more quantifiable dimensions of New Zealand wilderness. It is described in terms of who the wilderness users are (age, nationality etc.) ‘why’ they chose to undertake such a trip, ‘how many people’ they travelled with, and ‘how they travelled’ to, from and during their wilderness visit, ‘what they expected’ from their experience, the ‘main activities’ undertaken, ‘where’ they went and ‘how long’ their trips lasted. All participants who completed a research diary were asked to provide specific details about their trip before they departed. As explained in the previous chapter, participants are identified by a number which refers to their research diary (e.g. Diary 341). Those people who were interviewed after they had completed their trip retained the same number for their interview, and are described with their first initial and then this number (J 341).

7.2 Age

*I mean, you go into Fiordland and you'll see that almost everyone in these areas is someone like me - about my age and experience. You don't see a lot of young people because they’re not experienced enough - they just think it's too hard or too much effort, and the older guys simply can't do those kinds of trips anymore (R 230).*

Wilderness trips to Fiordland tended to be undertaken by people from about the age of 25 up to around 50. Particularly for the hunters in this study, wilderness seemed to be something that they chose to explore a bit later in life – partly because of work and family commitments, but also because of the need for skills and experience. The ages of the participants can be seen in Table 7.1, and a ‘typical’ group of wilderness visitors can be seen in Figure 7.1.
Table 7.1: Age of wilderness participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 19 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49 years</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+ years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ages ranged from between 20-29 years to over 60 years old. Most participants (77%) were between the ages of 20 and 49 years old, however this varied between nationalities and visitor types. International visitors tended to be in their mid to late 20s, whilst New Zealand participants were mainly in their late 30s and 40s. Many of the trampers were in a younger age bracket than the hunters\(^{87}\). This may be because a large proportion of them were international visitors on a backpacking tour of New Zealand.

Figure 7.1: Wilderness trampers

Photograph: Kerry Wray

The absence of hunters in the younger age groups is largely due to the fact that Fiordland (and particularly the Glaisnock Wilderness Area) is regarded as one of the most challenging hunting experiences in New Zealand. People wishing to undertake such a trip are generally

\(^{87}\) When I talk about ‘hunters’, I am referring to recreational deer hunters. Fiordland is an extremely popular location for hunting various types of deer.
required (or expected) to develop a great deal of experience and expertise before attempting to do so. As ‘M’ explained to me:

*Fiordland is a place for the experienced - people really need to develop their skills before they go there. I didn’t go there until I was 27 - and that was definitely a good time to go. I’d done years of hunting before that, but Fiordland was just the next step up, and that was a good time to do it* (M 244).

Wilderness trips can also require a significant time (and often financial) commitment, which may not be possible for people with young children or complex work ties. Although this does not really apply to international visitors (as the majority were on extended holidays to New Zealand) this may help to explain the lower numbers of New Zealand participants in the younger age brackets.

There also appears to be an *upper* limit on the ages of people undertaking wilderness trips – most likely because of their challenging and demanding nature. As noted by one participant in his 40s: ‘I'm making the most of Fiordland while I can now, because I know that when I get to a certain age, I won't be going anywhere like that again’ (M 244). The same respondent recounted a story about a friend who decided to ‘call it quits’ after his last trip to Fiordland when he realised that he had reached his physical capacity for this kind of experience:

*Back in 2004, we took a friend's father with us. He was 65 and had been hunting in there for years. It rained really hard one night and we had to walk him out and do several river crossings to get us to the hut - we had to swim across, and the water was up to here on him [indicating chest level]. We got him out okay, but it was pretty tough at times. After that trip, he said that's it; he's not going back. He's drawn the line there. He said there's a limit to what he can do, and he's reached that limit. He's had his time in Fiordland. That's it; he's been there and done it, and he won't be going back there again* (M 244).

In terms of age, therefore, the window of opportunity for wilderness trips in Fiordland is relatively small. This may explain why so many participants (especially hunters) who are sufficiently experienced and still physically fit enough to make the trip; return year after year to maximise the time they have left. This thought was expressed by ‘R’:

*Well it feels like I've only got a limited time frame in which to do these trips, which is why I'm concentrating on places like Fiordland at the moment. Hunting easier places like Stewart Island or the Kaimanawas can come later when I'm an old person, and can't really do these wilderness trips anymore* (R 230).

A number of the non-hunting respondents who had visited some of the more remote areas also shared this view. They felt that wilderness was something to be explored while one was still young and fit, and that marked tracks (such as the ‘Great Walks’) would be more suited to them later in life. One of the oldest participants in this study explained how he had struggled
at times during this particular trip and, despite the fact that he was thrilled with his accomplishment, he had decided that this would be his last wilderness trip in Fiordland:

*I mean I was 69 when I did the trip, and I'm 70 now. And although I still plan to do easier trips in Fiordland like the Milford, I will probably never be able to do a trip like that again* (B 067).

Often the question of age came up in discussions about who should be able to access remote and wilderness areas. There was a firm belief amongst the majority of participants that wilderness should only be available to those who are fit and able enough. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight.

### 7.3 Nationality

Figure 7.2 shows that almost two thirds (42 out of 67) of participants in this study were New Zealanders (or normally resided in New Zealand). Of these, 24 lived in the South Island, and 18 lived in the North Island. There was considerable variation in nationality between visitor groups, and this was particularly evident between trampers and hunters. Almost 70 per cent of the trampers in this study normally resided overseas, whereas over 90 per cent of the hunters were from New Zealand. *All* of the climbers and fishermen, and almost 85 per cent of kayakers, were also from New Zealand, however numbers of participants in these categories were too small to make inferences from.

![Figure 7.2: Normal place of residence](image)

The high proportion of international trampers may be explained by the fact that 72 per cent of them were walking the Dusky Track - and 74 per cent of *these* were from overseas. The Dusky Track is rapidly gaining a reputation amongst overseas visitors as the pinnacle of New Zealand tramping tracks, and has become popularised through publications like the ‘Lonely Planet’ guide to New Zealand.
Several participants expressed surprise that there were so many overseas visitors walking the track during the study period:

_I was really surprised that there was only one group of Kiwis on the Dusky Track. We met a Dutch guy, an Austrian, a Belgian, and a big group of Czech tourists. We also met some Israelis and some Americans (J 061)._ 

Those respondents who commented on the issue attributed the high numbers of international trampers to the fact that The Dusky Track is now promoted in a number of guidebooks which are popular amongst international backpackers. Some respondents (particularly New Zealanders) were sad and disappointed at the low numbers of Kiwis in these areas. At times, this manifested itself as anger, resentment and even xenophobia towards ‘foreigners’, indicating that there is potential for conflict between New Zealanders and ‘new’ or ‘foreign’ visitors to wilderness. The growing use of public conservation land by overseas visitors is a complex issue which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Nine.

### 7.4 Group size

_For me, a wilderness experience is a time when you can go away and learn what it's like to be by yourself or with a very small group of people (Diary 067)._ 

Wilderness experiences were generally regarded as something that people do alone, or with a few close companions. As such, most of the participants in this study were travelling in small groups. Table 7.2 shows the group sizes of participants in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Size</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travelling alone</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 people</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4 people</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 6 people</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 or more people</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean group size was three and the mode was two. Only four respondents were in a group of seven or more. They explained that this was because shared transport to the extremely remote areas was only really feasible in a large group and that they actually spent their time
travelling in smaller groups. The three main types of group are described in the next section. These are: solo travel, small group travel (two to four people), and larger group travel (e.g. five or more people).

7.4.1 Solo travel

Seven participants in this study were travelling alone. All of these were trampers, and all but one was walking a marked route. Although respondents generally acknowledged that it was sensible to travel with at least one (preferably two or three) other companions because of the dangers and difficulties that a wilderness experience may entail, these particular individuals felt that the benefits of travelling solo outweighed the risks and would provide them with greater opportunities for solitude, isolation, reflection, introspection and personal challenge.

One of the solo female trampers wrote in her diary, for example, how she was using this wilderness trip as a way to do some ‘soul searching’ and to gain a different perspective on life, and it was therefore important for her to be alone: ‘I hope to lift my fear boundaries and show myself I’m able to do what my soul really wants. I hope to meet nobody else’ (Diary 36). She described how travelling alone provided her with precious time to think and reflect on life:

I learned a lot about myself on this trip... I think the whole experience is like the journey of life. At times I didn’t know which way to turn; sometimes I chose one way and sometimes another; sometimes I made a good choice and sometimes I didn’t, but I always found a solution... In the quiet of nature I felt my inner happiness and freedom... I grew as a person on this hike (Diary 36).

Similarly, another solo female tramper explained how her wilderness trip had provided her with invaluable opportunities for solitude and introspection:

My feeling of solitude and freedom was complete on this trip. It was such a luxury to be allowed to be alone in such a beautiful place... time and space to think and be alone and with nature (Diary 45).

This respondent also placed great value on the way in which she was able to accomplish such a feat alone: ‘Fiordland gave me a taste of wilderness. It pushed me to my limits and let me out with only bruises. A wonderful experience - my biggest solo adventure yet!’ (Diary 45).

An experienced male wilderness user who was travelling solo explained why he preferred to travel alone whenever possible. For him, being alone with nature was a very special and intense experience which he valued immensely. The following quotation from his interview illustrates his feelings on this topic:
A solo trip is quite different... When you're travelling on your own, you kind of cease to exist. You're not having any other interactions with other people; you're not seeing anything human. You're reduced to a pair of eyes and ears and senses experiencing everything around you... Because you're not distracted by anything human, you're much more aware of everything; you observe it much better, and you interact with it much better. Whereas if there are other people in your group, you're interacting with them; you're very conscious of being human... that's the key difference. [pause...] And it's not... you know, better or worse; it's just a different kind of experience (K 323).

Clearly for these respondents, being able to interact with the environment is a crucial part of wilderness, and the best way of truly achieving this is by travelling alone. Several of them did, however, acknowledge that there were disadvantages associated with travelling alone, and both female participants in this category spoke of times when they felt afraid, apprehensive or lonely and wished for some company. Everyone in this category thought that there were certain kinds of trips where they would choose to travel with a companion rather than alone – for example complex alpine trips where the risks may be greater, or where specialised skills are required.

7.4.2 Small groups (two to four people)

Travelling in a small group was by far the most popular way to experience the Fiordland wilderness. Almost 80 per cent of respondents were in a group of this size, and they gave several key reasons for travelling with companions (rather than alone). The primary consideration was safety. Due to the remoteness and isolation of Fiordland (like most New Zealand wilderness), they felt that it was necessary to travel with at least one companion in case of accidents or emergencies: ‘In normal circumstances, I often hunt by myself, but in places like Fiordland I generally stay with at least one other person - for safety reasons’ (R 230). A number of the hunters actually spent a great deal of time travelling alone during the day, but always rejoined their companions at base camp each evening. If there was something particularly difficult that they were going to have to navigate, however, then they generally travelled in pairs:

A lot of the time we might spend by ourselves - we split up, but you always go back to base camp in the evening, and if you're planning to do tricky bits, like climbing some tops or something, then you'll make sure you have someone with you - just in case (M 244).

Other reasons for choosing to travel in a group rather than alone included practicalities such as the high cost of accessing a remote area alone (especially with a substantial amount of
equipment); the hunting ballot system, and logistics related to the particular activity being undertaken - for example climbing or portaging kayaks alone is extremely difficult. Finally, a number of people said they chose to travel with others because they valued the social aspect of experiencing wilderness with friends. Although most respondents enjoyed being able to spend time alone during their trip, they also found great pleasure in sharing their adventures with their companions. As explained by ‘F’:

> And you're often hunting by yourself of course, but to come back at the end of the day and to have a chat with your friends, and to be able to share what you've done with them, well it just adds so much to the whole experience - sharing it is fantastic... Well, in saying that, I wouldn't want to share it with a lot of people (laughs!), but three or four people, it's a good thing to share! (F 134).

The idea of spending time with friends in the wilderness is a cultural tradition in many countries like New Zealand with a strong history of outdoor recreation. As will be revealed in Chapter Ten, many of the New Zealand respondents in this study have grown up with the tradition of visiting wild and remote areas with their families, and continuing to do so with friends is an extension of this.

The belief that wilderness experiences can foster, and help to develop, friendships and relationships was also a popular theme in the diaries and interviews. Participants enjoyed travelling in small groups and overcoming the challenges and difficulties together because it enabled them to forge stronger relationships. This is illustrated in the following interview extracts, and is discussed further in Chapter Eight:

> When you’re in such a small group in a place like that, you’re totally focused on the people you’re with, because there's very little outside interference, and so you get to spend good quality time with those folks (D 007).

> There are so many things that happen during your experience that draw you closer together and help you to forge these friendships. I guess it’s partly the remoteness and the element of danger that help to do that... Like a couple of years ago we were just setting up camp late at night and one of the guys dropped his sleeping bag over the side of a huge cliff and we had to go climbing around in the dark in this really dodgy area for hours to find it. It's crazy, but you do it because that's just part of the experience. And so you form this really amazing bond with the guys you're travelling with - I'm not sure whether you can really get that in other areas of life (B 196).

Although there was a general acknowledgement that travelling with companions was the best idea, respondents also discussed the importance of keeping group sizes small. Reasons for this included the practicalities of travel in rugged areas (keeping a large group together and

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88 With the hunting ballot system in New Zealand, a group of hunters (up to a maximum of 8 people) are designated a particular area, or block, for a ten day period. They are transported into the area at the start of the trip, and then spend the rest of the time hunting that area.
finding somewhere for everyone to camp for the night can be very difficult) and more importantly, the difficulties of making group decisions when there are too many people:

*I think that 3 was a really good number, but anything over 4 or 5 would be too many... If you increase the group size too much more, then you start having factions and things like that* (J 061).

It is also interesting to note that even in a smaller group, the experience can be challenging – especially if the living or travelling conditions become particularly difficult. This was the case with one of the more adventurous kayak trips down the Fiordland coast. The group of four had successfully paddled a considerable distance during the first six days of the trip before running into some difficulties when the wind picked up coming into one of the sounds. This led several members of the group to break one of the ‘rules’ that the party had decided on before the trip (staying within a certain distance of one another). A culmination of this, and the dangers faced during that day, caused tension within the group, and eventually one member of the party decided to leave the others behind and depart Fiordland by helicopter before the planned trip was over. This incident was described by respondent 332:

**Day 7:** The head wind started to pick up and soon was 20 to 30 knots from the south. At that point we probably should have turned back but we decided to go on round into the inlet. The wind and waves were really bad at this point and I was fast running out of energy. If we had stopped paddling we would have been on the rocks and probably dead within a very short time... Stu and Andy (in the other kayak) had broken our rule of staying within 50m of each other and I felt very vulnerable out there. After 9.5 hours of paddling we made it to the larger of the Passage Islands and landed on a small beach where the others were waiting for us. I never want to experience conditions like that again.

**Day 9:** Things got a bit tense later as we discussed what we might do from here. After our scare coming down the coast on Thursday, Stu is refusing to paddle the south coast and Andy and I are not very keen either, unless the weather is perfect.

**Day 12:** ... Today Stu decided to leave us to it and got a ride out in a helicopter. This makes it impossible for us to do any more paddling along the coast... Josh is pretty disappointed as he put a huge amount of time and energy into organising this trip (Diary 332).

### 7.4.3 Larger groups

Despite the inherent challenges of wilderness travel with larger groups, eight of the study participants travelled to Fiordland with four or more companions. In most cases, this decision was made more out of necessity than by choice, and the group split up for travel once they had arrived. For example the large party of kayakers (four of whom completed diaries) had travelled to Fiordland together on a commercial fishing vessel as this was the only economically viable way to access Preservation Inlet, but immediately on arrival they broke
up into three smaller parties. Several of the hunting parties had booked the hunting block together as a larger group, but then split into two smaller groups when they arrived.

Numerous challenges and frustrations involved in travelling with a larger group were identified by respondents. Some of these are illustrated through the following diary extracts from a participant who travelled in a group of eight:

**Day 3:** Feels like eight is a big group to organise. Takes a lot of time to pack up. But it is ok, I just have to adjust...

**Day 5:** Tried to discuss whether to portage or to paddle around. Unable to come to a decision, so decided to leave decision till tomorrow. Interesting group dynamics. Everyone trying to be considerate of others but still fairly determined to do what they want...

**Day 8:** Finding it difficult in the group...

**Day 9:** Good talking to Jess – she made me feel as if I actually had something to contribute. I have not felt this with some of our group so far... Felt a bit weepy later on and wanted to go home...

**Final thoughts:** This may not surprise you, but I wouldn't go again! If I did go, I would carefully choose who I went with. I would have done a smaller trip with them all prior to going. I would go in a smaller party. four would be good - five maximum (Diary 188).

Travelling through wilderness is clearly an intense and often very challenging experience. On numerous occasions, respondents stressed the importance of choosing companions carefully, and being aware of peoples’ abilities and limitations: ‘A big part of the experience is the people you go with, and I'm very selective of the people I go into Fiordland with - because it's just so much harsher’ (M 244). Several people who had been on lengthy trips in large groups wrote about the importance of maintaining good group dynamics. For example:

*Before leaving, you should check that every member of the party does want to go... Talk to party members about their expectations of the trip – do they match well-enough? Do you want a leader?* (Diary 188).

*This trip has reminded me just how important good group processes, cooperation and decision-making are in developing a cohesive group and an enjoyable experience* (Diary 10).

And some participants recounted some of the difficulties they had encountered as a result of their choice of travelling companions. For example:

*A very disappointing day for me personally. We had a mini group rebellion as some members of the group were not happy about continuing with our original trip plan* (Diary 140).
The most disappointing thing today was when one of the party wanted to go in a different direction to get to Lake Grave, when it was pointed out to him that the compass said it was in a particular direction, his comment was "your compass must be wrong"... This was a situation that should not have needed to be discussed at all. This particular member of the party will not be coming with me back into Fiordland. I believe he is a disaster waiting to happen. He lacks Fiordland navigational and safety basics, and Fiordland is not a place where mistakes are not punished (Diary 194).

Most intra-group conflicts occurred when important decisions had to be made about where or when to travel, or where the potential risks were greater. The challenges of group travel also tended to become greater as the group size or duration of the trip increased, or if a particular group member was of a lesser ability, or lacked teamwork skills.

7.5 Why a wilderness experience in Fiordland?

Because of the remoteness, the majestic scenery, the challenge and the isolation; and because very few other people go there (Diary 61).

Most respondents gave several reasons for their decision to undertake a wilderness trip in Fiordland, and these generally fell into three categories – the location, the activity and the anticipated experience. By far the most frequently cited reason was the location. A large majority were visiting somewhere they had never been to before, and so exploring a new area was a key motive for their trip: ‘because I haven’t been in this area before and wanted to explore a bit more of Fiordland’ (Diary 66). People were also drawn to Fiordland by unique features of the area such as ‘remoteness’, ‘isolation’, ‘scenic beauty’, ‘unspoiled nature’, ‘size’, ‘challenging terrain’, and distance from civilisation: ‘because of its reputation for remote beauty’ (Diary 202); ‘Rumour has it as the most beautiful place in the world – I thought I should check it out’ (Diary 53). In most of the popular literature about Fiordland National Park (including the National Park Plan), the area is described as possessing ‘unique wilderness qualities’, and so it is not surprising that people felt that it was the perfect location for a wilderness trip.

For other visitors, their chosen activity was the primary reason for undertaking the trip: ‘because I want to hunt Wapiti deer’ (Diary 298); ‘because I want to climb Mount Tutoko’ (Diary 274). Respondents who felt this way were almost all hunters or climbers. Many of them valued Fiordland because it provided a unique opportunity to undertake a particular activity, such as climbing a certain peak, or hunting a particular breed of deer: ‘because this is

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89 The Wapiti deer (also known as Elk), is one of the largest species of deer in the world. Although native to North America and eastern Asia, Wapiti were introduced to New Zealand in 1909 for recreational hunting purposes. Once widespread in Fiordland, pure bred wapiti (i.e. not wapiti/red deer cross) can only be found in the Glaisnock Wilderness Area, which is now a highly sought-after hunting area for these large mammals.
the only area in the Southern hemisphere where I can hunt Wapiti’ (Diary 993). Several people also mentioned specific aspects of the experience as reasons for undertaking their trip. These included: opportunities for challenge, escape, solitude, and to develop skills and experience: ‘because it seemed to be the most challenging area’ (Diary 045); ‘because I wanted to get away to a remote area’ (Diary 061); ‘because of the lack of people’ (Diary 067), and ‘because I wanted to gain more experience of route walking’ (Diary 226). The importance of these (and many more) experiential elements will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

Finally, several people had based their decision to make the trip on recommendations from others (who had previously visited the area), or on things they had read in guide books: ‘a friend suggested it’ (Diary 048); ‘it was recommended by others’ (Diary 225); ‘it was recommended in the Lonely Planet walking guide’ (Diary 037); ‘because of descriptions and photographs from DOC and other websites and Australian WILD magazine’ (Diary 241). This highlights the significance of word of mouth in promoting an area, and the growing popularity of Fiordland national park in guide books and tourist publications.

7.6 Expectations of the experience

*I expect rugged and remote travel where self-reliance is a necessity and all my tramping experience will be called on. I expect to deal with thick bush, slow travel, and to have to take care in places (open tops, slippery grass etc). I don't expect to see anyone beyond the Dusky Track. I hope to come away enriched by the challenge of Fiordland tramping* (Diary 140).

Respondents’ expectations of wilderness were complex, diverse and multi-dimensional, and derived from a variety of sources. Many of the responses to this question were long and detailed, and incorporated a variety of factors such as environmental expectations (terrain, weather conditions and scenery); social expectations (who, and how many people they expected to meet); experiential expectations (how they expected to feel, what they expected to learn), and the various benefits that they thought they would accrue from the experience. Expectations were described in terms of various senses including sight, sound and smell, and included details about what participants thought they might learn during the trip, and what they might like or dislike about it. A number of individuals also mentioned what they did *not* expect (or did not want) to see, to hear or to encounter, serving to highlight the relational value of wilderness (i.e. it is valued for what it is not): ‘I don’t expect to encounter any other people during my trip’ (Diary 274); ‘I don’t expect to see any sign of human activity’ (Diary 331), ‘It will be good to see no signs of civilisation or tourists!’ (Diary 226).
It was clearly easier for people to describe the more tangible aspects of their expectations (such as what they might see or hear) than the intangible aspects such as how they might feel. This was also evident to some extent during the interviews, where people described with relative ease what they actually did in Fiordland, but often found it difficult to explain why they chose to do a particular thing, or how they felt about it. Despite this, a few people revealed some of their fears and worries in their diaries before their trip began, and gave an indication of things they were expecting to find frustrating or challenging. Respondent 332 noted, for example, that: ‘I am worried about the weather and the exposed nature of the coastline’, and respondent 41 wrote: ‘I expect to be frustrated by the weather, vegetation and sandflies. I expect challenges of teamwork and weather, and irritation with visitors using mechanised transport’.

Almost everyone had very clear expectations about the physical and environmental setting for wilderness. This is because the natural environment (or the landscape) was a major factor in many people’s decision to come to Fiordland. The ‘majestic scenery’ featured in many accounts, as did the ‘natural’ and ‘untouched’ landscape and the diversity of flora and fauna. Some participants – particularly hunters – were extremely knowledgeable about the kind of environment they were heading into, and were able to provide fairly detailed descriptions of this. Respondent 134, for example, wrote: ‘I expect to see high numbers of red deer in a very remote part of Fiordland. It should be wet, but with some clear days. I expect high country with tussock and steep-sided valleys and a variety of native birds’. Other people (largely trampers and overseas visitors) commented more on the scenery and views that they were expecting: ‘I’m hoping for great views over Fiordland, gorgeous wild forests, rivers, mountains and nature as it is allowed to flourish’ (Diary 45); ‘I am hoping and expecting to see some dramatic scenery’ (Diary 398). Additional elements of the physical setting that featured frequently in people’s expectations were the mountainous landscapes, native ‘bush’, abundant water features (fiords, rivers, lakes, tarns and waterfalls), birdlife, sandflies, unpredictable weather and mud.

In terms of the social setting, there was a general expectation that the wilderness would be uncrowded, with little (or no) contact with anyone other than the members of the group. This notion of ‘getting away’ from other people was to be one of the defining characteristics of wilderness, and was clearly something that most respondents were hoping for. Views ranged from those who expected to see absolutely no-one: ‘I expect to see no trampers. I expect to

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90 As discussed in Chapter Six, one of the main advantages of the interview method is that it enables the researcher to probe further into reasons why people felt a certain way or said a particular thing.
see no other hunters’ (Diary 195) to those who were anticipating a few encounters: ‘I expect to meet maybe a handful of people with most huts to ourselves’ (Diary 202). Respondents who thought they might encounter others during their trip were of the belief that they would be of a similar mentality, and so would not have a major impact on their experience: ‘I expect a feeling of comradeship with any other groups encountered – assuming they are as self-sufficient as we are’ (Diary 10). This idea is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight, and illustrates that (even before commencing the trip) respondents had very clear ideas about the activities and practices that they believe are appropriate in wilderness.

Some respondents described their expectations of the managerial setting (attributes of the setting that are influenced by, or under the control of park managers). Most expected there to be minimal signs of management or human intervention: ‘I expect a true wilderness experience, with no sign of human activity’ (Diary 331). In some cases (generally in the gazetted wilderness areas) visitors expected no tracks or facilities, and in other areas (generally ‘Remote’ zones), they expected only basic facilities and a few track markers. Most people’s expectations tended to be in line with the management objectives for remote and wilderness areas in the park plan (described in Chapter Five) and guidelines in the Wilderness Policy (outlined in Chapter Two).

There was also a widely held expectation that wilderness participants would experience ‘natural quiet’ and separation from the sights and sounds of civilisation. This was described in various ways such as ‘peace and quiet’, ‘a nice quiet atmosphere’ and ‘natural peace’. Aircraft and other forms of motorised transport were some of the key signs of civilisation that respondents did not want to (or expect to) encounter during their experience: ‘I do not expect to see helicopters, aircraft and boats’ (Diary 274); ‘I expect to be far from boats and cars’ (Diary 202). Other things that people did not anticipate seeing were ‘Japanese tour groups’ (Diary 040), ‘speedboat trampers’ (Diary 413), ‘civilisation and tourists’ and ‘visitors using mechanised transport’ (Diary 226). This is another example of wilderness being defined in terms of what it is not.

Expectations about the nature of the wilderness experience were more difficult for respondents to articulate than ideas about the more tangible features of the trip because it required a certain degree of foresight and introspection which many people found difficult at this early stage in the trip. This type of information became more prevalent at the later stages of the diary-writing process and during the interviews, (highlighting the value of qualitative methods in uncovering meanings and values) and is included in Chapters Eight, Nine and
Ten. Of those respondents who did refer to the experiential aspects of their trip, most thought that it was likely to be intense, and often challenging. They referred to physical challenges: ‘I expect travelling difficulties and lots of challenges due to the terrain’ (Diary 196); and also mental challenges: ‘navigation along rugged ridge lines will be tough’ (Diary 323); ‘I expect to get wet, muddy and slightly low at times. I expect to ache and long for a shower!’ (Diary 226); ‘I expect to be challenged by being in a group of eight people for fourteen days and trying to make group decisions’ (Diary 188). This aspect of the experience appeared to be something which participants were not only anticipating, but were actively seeking: ‘I expect to reap the benefits of surmounting challenges and becoming reconciled to limitations imposed by nature’ (Diary 41) and ‘I expect to come away satisfied from completing the challenge’ (Diary 226). Comments of this nature made by New Zealanders often reflected a desire to re-live an experience similar to that of the pioneers or first explorers in New Zealand. For example, as noted in diary 195: ‘I expect to be able to push myself to the limit and to hunt the way my predecessors hunted 50 years ago’. This idea is discussed further in Chapter Ten.

Other elements of the experience that diarists expected were a need for self reliance: ‘I expect to be prepared to look after myself and not to have all the facilities laid on’ (Diary 321); isolation, remoteness, danger, exploration, adventure, escape, solitude, and a connection with the natural environment. Many of these are also characteristics which are associated with the stereotypical tough, rugged pioneering way of life; suggesting that wilderness may be a way in which some New Zealanders are able to recreate these past experiences.

Many of the positive outcomes believed to derive from wilderness, have been discussed in the literature (see Chapter Four). A range of benefits were also expected by study respondents. These included improved physical fitness, the development of navigation and outdoor skills, and socio-psychological benefits (such as improved confidence and sense of satisfaction) from surmounting challenges. Many participants believed that they would return refreshed, relaxed and recharged after their wilderness experience – they saw this kind of trip as an opportunity to escape from ‘real life’, and to de-stress away from the pressures of home and work. As noted by respondent 331: ‘I expect to return with a refreshed attitude to life’, and respondent 134: ‘I should return de-stressed, fit and recharged for the year to come’. It was common for those who were expecting socio-psychological changes to feel that that their wilderness experience would be inspirational, and would provide them with a clearer perspective on life: ‘I think I will return inspired and full of awe of the natural world’ (Diary 45).
It is important to note here that this section has only presented respondents’ *expectations* of their trip. These answers were provided *before* the trips began, and may not have reflected the reality of what they actually encountered. The realities of the experience will be the focus of Chapters Eight Nine and Ten. Where appropriate, these chapters will include comments on how accurately the realities reflected people’s expectations.

### 7.7 Main activity undertaken

The choice of activity undertaken in the New Zealand wilderness is heavily constrained by several factors - the key ones being management regulations and logistics (affected by weather, terrain conditions etc.). Management regulations prohibit activities that are not deemed to be consistent with the recreation objectives for the area (for example, mountain biking and activities which require motorised transport are not permitted in wilderness areas). In general, the more remote an area is, the fewer types of activity are permitted. The logistics of accessing remote and wilderness areas also limit the types of activities that can be undertaken because of practicalities (it is simply not feasible to transport a hang glider or a kayak into the middle of a wilderness area) and because of cost - even if it was possible to do so, the cost of such an undertaking would generally be enough to dissuade most people. As a consequence of this, there was a relatively small range of activity-types present during the study period (Figure 7.3).

![Figure 7.3: Main activity undertaken](image)

The activities undertaken were tramping, (recreational deer) hunting, kayaking, climbing and fishing. These are all ‘traditional’ New Zealand outdoor activities. It is likely that they are accepted and practised in these areas because they ‘fit’ with ideas about what should occur in
wilderness (e.g. non-motorised, challenging and adventurous activities). By far the two most popular wilderness activities were tramping (32 of the 67 participants) and hunting (25 out of 67 participants).

The high numbers of trampers in this study can be explained by a combination of factors. First, tramping is the quintessential New Zealand outdoor activity. It can be undertaken by people of all ages, and in comparison to many other types of outdoor recreation, it requires little equipment or expertise. At the most basic level, all that is required is a sturdy pair of tramping boots, good clothing, food and first aid provisions for the duration, and a tent or bivvy bag if there are no huts in the area. This means that access to remote and wilderness areas is easier for trampers than for other recreationists undertaking activities which require a significant amount of specialised equipment or expertise (for example, hunting, kayaking and mountaineering). Second, there are several tramping tracks in remote areas of Fiordland National Park that are becoming increasingly popular – especially amongst overseas visitors (The main example of this is the Dusky Track, but also the Hollyford-Pyke-Big Bay Route, and the George Sound Track). Over two thirds of the trampers in this study (23 out of 32) were walking the Dusky Track. Finally, the high proportion of tramping participants may also be due to the fact that the research was publicised in the Department of Conservation Visitor Centre in Te Anau, through which most trampers pass in order to fill out intentions forms before beginning their trip.

The popularity of hunting during the study period is likely to be due to a number of factors. The primary reason is that the Glaisnock Wilderness Area is the only place in the Southern hemisphere where one can hunt Wapiti deer. Second, the research was undertaken during the ‘roar’, which is the most popular hunting period of the year in Fiordland. Third, the research was publicised through the New Zealand Deer Stalkers Association (a powerful advocacy and recreation organisation in New Zealand) which has many extremely passionate and vocal members. It is likely that the organisation encouraged its members to take part in the research. And finally, the popularity of wilderness hunting may be attributed to the fact that hunting is regarded by many as a typical male outdoors activity in European settler societies like New Zealand (Hunter 2009). Early settlers were forced to hunt for food, and the tradition has continued to the present day, where hunting remains a popular leisure activity amongst certain sectors of the population. This is likely to be because of the enjoyment associated with the activity, but also because of its importance as a traditional cultural activity (ibid.). A number

91 As opposed to off-track wilderness trips which often follow no fixed route.
of the hunters in this study discussed the cultural and historic value of hunting. This is one of the main topics of discussion in Chapter Ten.

The absence of kayakers in the study is likely to be due to access difficulties. Four out of the six kayak participants travelled to the Fiordland coast together (in a group of fourteen people) on a commercial fishing vessel. Several of them mentioned the difficulty of access in their diaries, and stated that their trip was only made possible through this shared transport option. The low numbers of climbers and fishermen are again likely to be due to access difficulties associated with transporting equipment, and also because both activities tend to take place in fairly specific areas – for example climbing a particular peak, or fishing a particular river. In addition, the project was not specifically promoted amongst the fishing community, which may have affected response rates.

7.8 Locations visited

As explained in Chapter Six, for participants to be eligible to take part in this study, they had to be visiting a remote and wilderness area of Fiordland National Park (see Figure 5.10, p. 104). Access to wilderness can severely restrict where people are able to go, and much of Fiordland National Park (particularly the remote and wilderness areas) is relatively inaccessible. It is primarily for this reason that the Park has a long history of motorised access to remote areas (this is a controversial issue which will be discussed briefly in section 7.10 and in more detail in Chapter Nine). Despite the difficulty of accessing remote and wilderness areas, participants visited a wide range of locations during the study period – from Preservation Inlet in the Southern Remote zone, to the Pyke-Big Bay route in the Northern Remote zone (refer to Figure 5.10). There were some key areas that were more popular amongst study participants – largely because they represented established routes or hunting areas, or because they had relatively easily accessible entry and exit points. Table 7.3 shows the number of wilderness trips that took place in each zone during the study period.

The Southern Remote Zone (incorporating the Dusky Track and Preservation Inlet) and the Glaisnock Wilderness Area were clearly the most popular locations for a wilderness trip, although locations visited within the Glaisnock varied greatly (this was dictated by the hunting block booking system). In addition, a number of visitors to the Dusky Track varied their trip slightly, by either walking in a different direction, only completing certain sections, or spending time exploring other areas around the track during their visit. The Western Remote zone included several hunting blocks and a kayak trip along the arms of Lake Te
Anau; the Darrans Remote zone included two climbing trips and several wilderness tramps; everyone who was visiting the Doubtful Sound Remote zone was tramping off-track; visitors to the Eastern Remote zone were a fisherman, a climber and a solo trumper, and the two people who visited the Northern Remote were tramping the Big Bay-Pyke route.

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<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glaisnock Wilderness Area</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Remote</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrans Remote</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubtful Sound Remote</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Remote</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Remote</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trips also varied in the extent to which participants were exploring or simply following a set route. Some followed a well-established route or track (such as the Hollyford Track), from point A to point B, with pre-determined overnight stops at huts along the way. Other people undertook more flexible trips, but still generally followed a planned route. These kinds of visits were popular amongst participants who were tramping off-track. Most had a vague itinerary (for example they were planning to take between 5-7 days to tramp from point A to point B), but factors such as the exact routes taken, the distance travelled each day, and where they decided to make camp each night, were unplanned, and depended on the weather and terrain conditions. This element of flexibility and uncertainty was often described as one of the key characteristics of a wilderness experience, and was something that clearly distinguished it from other outdoor recreation trips.

Hunters planned their trips in a fairly specific way because of the block booking system. Their trips were typically the most flexible in this study. The hunters all had a fixed base from which they explored the surrounding area, and typically the only thing that was known in advance was approximately where and when the trip would start and finish. The actual details of the trip were almost entirely dependent on external factors such as weather conditions,
topography, terrain and deer behaviour. ‘B’ explained how this type of wilderness trip differed from tramping on tracks or established routes:

*The thing with tramping is that often you've got a schedule - you've got to be here at this time, and then somewhere else at this time, and on this day you've got to be out. Whereas when we go hunting; we just take it as it comes - if we don't get to where we were going, then it doesn't matter. We sometimes try to get to certain places, but we're not as duty-bound by time schedules as trampers often are (B 196).*

Again, this is probably similar to the way in which the pioneers and first settlers in New Zealand used to explore the country and, as such, this element of the wilderness experience may have cultural importance to New Zealanders.

### 7.9 Trip duration

The duration of participants’ wilderness experiences was based on a combination of factors, including individual and group preferences, personal commitments, logistics and access issues, weather conditions, managerial regulations and miscellaneous factors such as the length of the track being walked, or the length of time allocated in the hunting ballot. The criteria for taking part in this research stipulated that participants had to be undertaking a trip of more than two days’ duration. Table 7.4 shows the length of time that participants spent in the Park on this visit. Trips ranged from a minimum of two nights to a maximum of fourteen nights. The mean trip duration was 7.3 nights and the mode was seven. There was some variation between visitor groups - hunters and kayakers tended to spend the greatest length of time in the Park, with a mean trip duration of 8.8 nights and 11.8 nights respectively, while the climbers undertook shorter trips.

Overall, there was a clear preference for longer wilderness trips (more than 5 days) which was reinforced by comments later in the diaries and in the interviews. Respondents explained that this was because of both necessity and choice. The physical distance of Fiordland from major urban centres means that it takes a significant amount of time and effort (and often money) to get to the start of a wilderness trip, and so most people felt that a visit of at least a week was required in order to make their trip worthwhile. As ‘F’, a regular Fiordland hunter, explained to me, travelling to Fiordland can often be a lengthy and time consuming process:

*With all of these trips, we leave here [Wellington] on the 5pm ferry and we drive through the night, so we don't sleep. We're awake for 24 hours! Two of us share the driving - y'know, through the night. And it's a long way to Te Anau. We get there about 7am and sometimes we have to wait for the helicopter company and so we try and sleep in the car for a few hours until the pilot says it’s ok to go, so it’s a long trip down! [laughs...] (F 134).*
Table 7.4: Number of nights spent in Fiordland National Park on this visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of nights in the Park</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>6-9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The hunting booking system also meant that hunters tended to stay in the area for longer periods to take full advantage of their trip. For many of them, the Fiordland hunting trip was an experience which only happened once every year or two (or even less if they were unlucky in the ballot) and so unless the weather is atrocious, they try to stay for the duration of their booking.

Choosing to undertake a longer trip also appealed to participants because it enabled them to really ‘get involved’ in the experience, and to immerse themselves in the wilderness, rather than rushing there and rushing back: ‘If you've got at least five days, it's a lot more relaxed and it makes things a lot easier…’ (M 244). Many respondents felt that the long trip duration was one of the key characteristics of a wilderness experience that helped to distinguish it from other outdoor recreation trips. As ‘D’ and ‘N’ explained:

*I think that the duration is important as well, and that kind of goes with the fact that these trips take place in really remote areas. You tend to be there for at least a week. And it definitely takes a day or two to really get into the whole feeling of the wilderness experience - there's just something a little bit different about an extended trip of at least seven to ten days (D 007).*

*I guess one of the main things about it is just having that longer period... Maybe because it’s just that little bit longer, you are really able to forget about the rest of everyday life, and just concentrate on enjoying the trip (N 202).*

This element of wilderness is considered in greater depth in Chapter Eight.

### 7.10 Mode of travel

Because wilderness areas are places for quiet enjoyment, free from obvious human impact, and require physical endeavour to achieve in full measure the wilderness experience, the use of powered vehicles, boats or aircraft will not be permitted.

(Wilderness Advisory Group 1985)
Traditionally, wilderness in the Western world is a place where people travel independently, or ‘under their own steam’ – for example on foot or by kayak. This is one of the core values in most international wilderness legislation and policy, including the New Zealand Wilderness Policy 1985. However, there is a long history of motorised access to Fiordland (primarily because of its size and remoteness) which has meant that some of the traditional wilderness ideals have been compromised in certain areas. Although (with the exception of hunting access to certain wilderness areas during the roar) mechanised access to wilderness areas is prohibited, it is still permissible to access remote areas and the boundaries of wilderness areas by motorised means. Some people argue that this is the only feasible way for anyone to achieve a wilderness experience in Fiordland because of its remoteness and inaccessibility. However, as will be explained in Chapter Nine, this is certainly not a view which is shared by everyone. In addition, other developments such as improvements in technology and broader social factors (a growing urban population, increasing disposable income, busier lives, growing diversity of recreational activities therefore less time and experience) have also meant that motorised transport is being used more and more to facilitate recreational experiences in the area. This issue is one of the main themes in Chapter Nine.

Of the sixty seven participants in this study, only seven completed their trip entirely without the aid of some form of motorised transport within the Park. All of the other participants used either aircraft (helicopter or fixed wing), jet boat, small power craft or commercial fishing vessel (or a combination of these) to access and/or depart from their chosen area. Reasons given for the use of motorised transport included time constraints, the inaccessibility of certain areas, a desire to see Fiordland from a different perspective (e.g. from the air) and the difficulties of carrying supplies for an extended trip. It is important to note that no one actually used motorised transport during their visit (with the exception of a hunter who was rescued by helicopter and a kayaker who departed on a flight which was servicing a fishing vessel). Participants all travelled under their own steam during their trip, and frequently emphasised the importance of being self sufficient, self reliant and away from the sights and sounds of civilisation (especially motorised transport) when in wilderness.

The two methods of self-sufficient travel used by respondents during their trip were on foot, and by kayak. Sixty one people travelled on foot, and six used a combination of walking (including portaging kayaks) and kayaking. The issue of how people should access (and travel within) wilderness is extremely complex, philosophical, and often controversial. Many

92 The Fiordland National Park Plan (DOC 2008c) now stipulates exactly where and how frequently each concessioned aircraft operator can land.
respondents (in particular, New Zealanders) had very strong views on this topic, which are in part a reflection of existing wilderness legislation and policy, but are also rooted in the unique social and historic context of New Zealand.

7.11 Chapter Summary
This chapter has provided a variety of information about the study participants and their wilderness trips. This included basic descriptive data (age and nationality) and also information about where they went, how long they went for, how they travelled, who they went with and what they were expecting from their experiences. The key findings to note from this chapter are: 1) wilderness is neither something for the very young, nor the elderly. The window of opportunity (based on age, available time and level of experience) is relatively small and visitors seem to be aware of the need to maximise their time available by accessing wilderness while they are still fit and able; 2) the New Zealand wilderness resource is becoming increasingly popular amongst international visitors, and this may be causing anger amongst some New Zealanders who feel like they are being 'pushed out'; 3) small group travel is definitely the preferred way to experience New Zealand wilderness, although for personal or practical reasons, some people may choose to travel alone or in a larger group; 4) longer trips of at least five days are regarded by existing users as the ‘right’ way to experience wilderness because this enables visitors to become fully immersed in the setting, and to appreciate the numerous facets of wilderness; and 5) the expectations expressed by study respondents were generally consistent with the way wilderness is described in New Zealand policy, legislation and in the management plans for Fiordland (discussed in Chapter Five). Most people were expecting a challenging trip in a remote, natural, untouched and highly scenic location, with few other visitors and little evidence of human modification. In addition, a number of participants discussed what they did not expect to see in wilderness; highlighting the importance of wilderness as a relational concept (i.e. a contrast to society).

The congruence between visitor expectations and New Zealand legislative definitions of wilderness suggests that, either the management policies reflect wilderness users’ views very accurately, or that the participants in this study base their views on/expectations of wilderness on ideas and images contained in contemporary legislation and policy. Many of the comments made by respondents (especially New Zealanders) indicated that they had very specific ideas about what they were likely to (or what they were expecting to) encounter during their wilderness trip. This illustrates that they have particular understandings or preconceived ideas about what is appropriate in wilderness, where and when. Again, these beliefs are likely to be
a reflection of the ideas contained in existing policy and legislation, but may also have deep social and cultural roots.

A potential management issue which was raised in this chapter is the issue of motorised access. This is a complex issue because motorised transport clearly goes against many of the core wilderness values embodied in policy and legislation, but there is a long history of motorised transport in Fiordland because of its remoteness and inaccessibility. I return to this in Chapter Nine.

In the following chapter, I explore the meanings and values of New Zealand wilderness identified by respondents. This will be followed (in Chapter Ten) by an examination of the main threats to contemporary wilderness values.
Chapter 8
Meanings and values of wilderness

8.1 Introduction

One of the primary objectives of this research was to explore the meanings and values that visitors attribute to New Zealand wilderness. Findings related to this objective are presented in the current chapter. This includes a discussion of key experiential dimensions, values associated with the experience and features of the physical, social and managerial setting that are required to facilitate these dimensions. Respondents spoke passionately about what wilderness meant to them and described a diverse range of features that formed part of their wilderness experience. Despite this diversity, there was still a clear agreement on a range of core values that wilderness should embody. These values were given prominence by respondents in both the diaries and interviews and are presented here. In broad terms, participants believed that wilderness should involve personal challenges and ‘time out’ in a highly natural, unmodified and unregulated environment where there was very little chance of encountering anyone else. This chapter combines findings from the research diaries with interview data from wilderness participants and is supported with information from travel brochures and websites. It is structured around the eight core values of wilderness that were identified by respondents: challenge, ‘earning the experience’, self-reliance, solitude, escape, freedom and adventure, danger and risk and experiencing nature. Each value is discussed in a separate section, in terms of what it meant to respondents and why it was important to them.

8.2 Characteristics of wilderness

A wilderness experience should have adventure with the types of challenges only wilderness can provide. It should have hardships fought and overcome, serenity such as only mountains can provide, and a sense of humility at being just one small part of mother nature (Diary 208).

The above quotation is typical of the responses to the question ‘what should a wilderness experience entail?’ It demonstrates some of the complexity involved in wilderness and the multi-dimensional nature of the experience. Each of the core values identified by respondents is examined individually in this section.

8.2.1 Challenge

One of the key messages conveyed by participants in this study was that wilderness trips are not (and should not be) easy. From start to finish, they present a continuous challenge. These
challenges include negotiating difficult terrain, being exposed to extreme weather conditions, eating poor quality food, sleeping on rough rocky ground, resolving inter and intra group conflicts, dealing with injuries and illnesses and going for extended periods without a shower or a bath. A number of these difficulties are illustrated in the following interview extract:

It’s a really difficult trip. It's hard - it's really hard country – it’s amazingly hard. The whole experience is just such hard work! You have to carry everything in and back out again, and you have so much stuff. And there are no real tracks - you're sort of pushing up a riverbed or whatever - climbing over logs and god knows what. And you might walk for 10 or 12 hours some days. You get bumped, scratched and bruised; you might slip into one of the creeks, you might fall on the rocks – it can be really really hard going. And half that time it's raining, or it's snowing or hailing, and you're grovelled up in your little tent... wet and cold. And nothing dries... because it's so damp, so all your clothing's wet all the time. I mean, if you get wet, you stay wet. And then there’s the sleepless nights when it’s pouring with rain, and you’re wondering whether you’re going to get washed away. It’s tough alright! (R 134).

The challenging terrain and unpredictable weather conditions were often seen as the biggest difficulty. Visitors were completely exposed to the elements for most of their trip (although this was less so for people who slept in huts) and much of the Fiordland terrain is notoriously difficult to navigate through. In one of the few ‘publicity’ brochures available to independent wilderness visitors to Fiordland, these challenges are made explicitly clear:

**Figure 8.1: Department of Conservation Dusky Track description**

‘The Dusky Track offers trampers a challenging 84 km tramping track which requires at least eight days to complete… There are 21 three-wire bridges on this track. You can expect to encounter tree falls, deep mud, tree roots and river crossings. The track is suitable only for well equipped and experienced groups.’

Some tourism brochures for activities in remote and wilderness areas also give an indication of the difficulties that clients are likely to encounter during their trip. For example, the brochure for ‘Fiordland Wilderness Experiences’ (a guided kayaking operator) states:
Our approach to wilderness kayaking requires time and can involve discomfort and challenge… Sea kayaking and wilderness camping have inherent risks and can be dangerous. In Fiordland they are characterised by remoteness, rapidly changing and sometimes extreme weather and water conditions, cold water, limited kayak landing sites and camping under forest canopy.

(Fiordland Wilderness Experiences 2006)

Comments in the research diaries and interviews frequently demonstrated that these warnings were justified. For example:

Oh it’s tough - It's so rugged down there. There are boulders as big as houses, so you've got to go up over one and down under another one. And when you've got a full pack on and you're doing this for kilometres… It took us four and a half hours to a kilometre and a half! Yea - it's just sapping! We had to use ropes to get down bluffs - huge bluffs - I mean this building here [gesturing to the 9 story building in which we are seated] is probably a low one! Yea - it was bloody ridiculous! But there was no other way of getting out, so we had to do it. You'd have to drop down onto a ledge, and then lower all your gear down and then go down a bit further and do the same again. And there were sheets of ice that looked nice and level on the map [laughs…], but they were like mini glaciers, and a nightmare to navigate through - it was crazy! (J 194).

There were many instances when wilderness participants described feeling physically ‘exhausted’, ‘shattered’ or ‘drained’ as a result of struggling through the tough terrain:

‘Walked up from mouth of Bull Gully. Very hard trip… I am stuffed’ (Diary 247); ‘I walked long and hard today and my knees are letting me know it’ (Diary 45); ‘After a further six hours hunting with packs on we were totally exhausted’ (Diary 993). Figure 8.2 illustrates some of the challenges involved in wilderness travel in Fiordland.

It was not only the physical setting that presented difficulties in wilderness. The whole living environment was described as particularly tough, as it involved surviving in basic, and often uncomfortable conditions, sleeping on rough ground, being constantly wet and cold, feeling exhausted, wearing dirty, wet clothes, carrying heavy packs, eating poor quality (or not enough) food and being ‘eaten’ by sandflies. This did eventually ‘get to the bottom’ of some people by the end of their trip, as can be seen in the following diary extract:

Am tired of having wet feet from the moment I pull my boots on, to when I climb into bed at the end of the day. Feet are swollen up like big prunes because they're just sitting in water all the time, and there's nothing we can do about it. Most of the time in Fiordland you are too wet or too cold… Wekas\(^3\) are a real pain at the camp as well, and my clothes are getting smelly. Not happy with wilderness areas (Diary 230).

\(^3\) A weka (\textit{Gallirallus australis}) is a native New Zealand bird that is notorious for stealing food and being a general annoyance to campers.
The duration of a wilderness trip and the length of the days also proved very testing for some individuals. Often up to twelve hours a day was spent struggling through arduous terrain and in poor weather conditions, meaning that participants were physically (and often mentally) exhausted by the end of each day. This was especially so for the hunters in this study who deliberately rose early and travelled until late in the evening because dawn and dusk are the best times for hunting. As explained by ‘R’:

> Well you put big hard days in. You're up an hour before light - trying to get to somewhere where the animals could be - because they only spend a certain amount of time in the bush. And you're always out for a couple of hours after dark, so they're big days; hard days - you're always pushing into difficult country, because of the nature of the animals - they're always in the tough country; they always go up higher and steeper than where you should be... So sometimes you could be up for 4 or 5 hours before daylight to walk into some valley before the light hits, and a lot of travelling at night if you're keen... just to get to that special place and to travel when the wind's right at the right time. You certainly come out battered and bruised afterwards! (R 195).

Most wilderness visitors also carried heavy packs full of gear (food and water, clothing, tents, mats and sleeping bags, hunting or photography equipment and cooking equipment) to sustain them for up to two weeks in the bush which presented a further challenge:

> Yea, just carrying the gear in that kind of environment is also a huge challenge. We're in our 50s, and we get there with these huge packs, and say 'oh, did you weigh your pack?' and of course we all did, but we say 'oh no, but I think it's only about bla bla'.
And we know exactly how heavy they are - about 40 kilos, and here we are stomping around the high country with this huge weight on our backs. We have binoculars and spotting scopes, and cameras and recording gear - so once you've got all that in, it's pretty heavy and there's not much room for food! [laughs...] ... (J 995).

In addition, it became clear that there were a significant number of mental challenges associated with wilderness travel – for example, having to navigate safely through difficult terrain:

And the navigation in Fiordland is such a challenge as well. That's really important to me. There's the challenge of finding a passage through difficult country; choosing a good route that doesn't put you into danger; doing it in relative safety, and being quite confident in what you're doing. I really enjoy that - when there's lots of bluffs and mountains and stuff I'll pore over a map, and then I'll get there and just try and find ways through (K 323).

Being confined to a tent or a hut for several days due to weather conditions, and spending intense periods with a small group of people:

And I think the mental part of it is quite a big thing, because the conditions out there, and a couple of days stuck in a tent with a few people can drive you nuts! But it doesn't drive me nuts, because I appreciate that it's just part of the whole experience (M 244).

As illustrated in both of the previous quotations, however, the challenges presented by wilderness were seen as a vital element of the experience. The negative feelings associated with many of the difficult situations encountered in Fiordland were almost always followed some time later by sensations of happiness, fulfilment and a sense of achievement. ‘M’ explained this to me:

Yea - it is hard to put into words. But even with all the challenges that are involved, as soon as I get home from a trip, I'm just bursting to go back again - I can't wait for the next trip! And even when it's freezing - your toes are frozen, your fingers are cold, you're hungry and tired, you smell awful - it's still a great experience [pauses...] ... I think, for me, that everything else is just too easy (M 244).

Learning to deal with these challenges was a fundamental, enjoyable and desired part of the overall experience. Respondents relished the fact that they had to use their own skills and abilities to overcome the problems they faced, and overwhelmingly viewed this as a crucial part of the experience: ‘Oh probably the challenge was the main reason I did this trip…’ (J 061). They actively sought an experience which would require them to go outside their comfort zone and which would push them beyond their physical and mental boundaries.

Many indicated that they knowingly entered into difficult and daunting situations because of the challenges, and the knowledge that they would derive a great sense of personal satisfaction from overcoming them: ‘I must push myself because that is at the heart of it. If it
is too easy, then it is not an adventure’ (Diary 066). Having to deal with such challenges served to reinforce the fact that this was a wilderness experience, and ‘not your average outdoor recreation trip’.

A number of respondents indicated that they specifically chose to come to Fiordland because of the struggles they were likely to encounter, and felt that much of the pleasure they experienced arose from overcoming these problems. As ‘S’ explained:

*And there's a great deal of satisfaction involved in the challenge of a trip like this... [pauses...] as you live life, you decide you want to set yourself challenges - you want to push yourself and see what you can achieve. And I think that's a really important part of the whole experience - getting off the beaten track, finding our own routes; surviving the elements, and getting back home safely. That whole experience of overcoming those challenges is incredibly satisfying - it's something that you'll have memories of until your older days. It's very, very satisfying* (S 152).

Wilderness thus presents an opportunity for people to use their own skills and initiatives to find solutions to a variety of problems. Skills that can be learnt and practised in wilderness include navigation, map-reading, first aid, selecting suitable camp spots, camp safety and hygiene and using equipment (such as kayaks, mountain radios and rifles). These are all traditional ‘bush skills’ which would have been used by the early explorers and pioneers in New Zealand, and which contemporary wilderness users evidently enjoy continuing to practise.

**Personal benefits of challenge**

In support of much of the early wilderness benefits literature (discussed in Chapter Four), respondents thought that the challenges involved in wilderness travel provided them with important opportunities for personal growth and development such as increased self esteem, optimism, independence, and greater awareness of the ‘self’. ‘J’ explained to me why he and his companions found the challenge to be such an important part of their experience:

*We were quite keen for the challenge, and wanted to really push our limits. I think that my companions both had psychological limits as well as physical limits, and they really wanted to push those, and this gave them a perfect arena where they had no other option than to do that. And I think they got a lot out of challenging themselves mentally and physically in that way* (J 061).

The two key aspects of personal-development discussed by respondents were increased self-confidence and a sense of achievement. The following diary extracts illustrate how overcoming difficult situations had positive psychological effects on the wilderness users in this study:
I have found I am capable alone of achieving something. Of looking after my well-being in adverse conditions... My trip has given me greater control over my mind. I feel stronger, calmer, more capable (Diary 45).

Doing this trip after so many years doing other things has made me aware that there is no reason why I can’t keep going for a good few years to come. This has a major psychological effect on me because I doubt that I can just grow old gracefully and sit on the porch in the sun. I need to be doing trips like this one to be at peace with myself. My batteries are recharged for the year to come – Thank you Fiordland (Diary 066).

For a number of respondents, the challenge was the most satisfying aspect of their trip. As noted by ‘K’ who was on a 10 day solo trip:

I enjoy in a masochistic way the challenge of it – knowing one’s limits, always able to pull back and figure out another way.... I really like the way Fiordland puts these problems in your path just when you least expect them. But there is always a way, and finding it is the challenge – that’s what wilderness is all about (Diary 323).

Several indicated that without the challenge (and the associated opportunities to develop skills and abilities) they would feel ‘cheated’, or dissatisfied, and would be unlikely to experience the sense of elation that they do after completing such a tough trip. ‘B’ said:

If the challenge were no longer part of the experience, then it wouldn't be much of an experience then would it?! I mean, if there's no challenge then there wouldn't be much point in doing it!’ (B 067).

A few even complained that the conditions were not as challenging as they had expected, and thought that this took away some of the satisfaction of completing their trip:

The weather was so kind, I almost feel cheated - the dry conditions meant that the walk wasn’t as challenging as I’d expected and feared, and somewhere deep down, hoped. I don’t feel the same sense of achievement at finishing as I thought I might (Diary 202).

Some respondents contrasted the satisfaction gained from surmounting such challenges to doing it the ‘easy way’ – for example flying in by aircraft, or using a commercial guide to facilitate the experience. In the eyes of these individuals, accessing wilderness the ‘hard way’ (with no external help or guidance) is the only acceptable way to experience wilderness. Anything else was seen as a poor imitation. This idea is illustrated in the following quotation, and is discussed again in Chapter Nine:

It was quite an achievement to finally get there - it was a lovely spot, and was definitely worth the effort. Of course, you probably could have flown there and seen the same views, but I think that the combination of planning, exertion and strategy creates an experience that you can't get simply by flying in somewhere. People do attempt to recreate that experience by getting in a helicopter, flying to the top of a peak somewhere, and getting out to take photos or what have you, but they won't have
actually had the same experience; that same sense of achievement at putting in the effort to achieve the goals - and you can never take that away from us! (R 068).

Comments like this demonstrate that wilderness users often have preconceived ideas about the level of challenge that wilderness should offer, and imply that if these expectations are not met, then they are likely to be disappointed and dissatisfied.

**Societal benefits of challenge**

Several respondents also discussed their belief in the wider societal benefits of the challenges presented by wilderness. In the two quotations below, for example, both ‘K’ and ‘J’ explain how important they believe it is for people to test their mental capabilities:

*I think that it's really important to allow people to continue to challenge themselves - particularly young people, who are seeking that challenge – be it mental or physical. They really need that challenge as part of their personal growth (K 323).*

*And I subscribe to the view that young people need a physical challenge so they can find out their physical boundaries and limitations; what they can and can't do - rather than wearing their thumbs out on space invaders! (J 995).*

Some participants expressed disdain towards the increasingly risk-averse nature of Western society, and the absence of opportunities for people to challenge themselves like they do in wilderness: ‘I sometimes think that modern society wants to remove all risk, and in doing so, put adventure in jeopardy’ (Diary 067). They felt that people (especially young people) today are being ‘cotton woolled’ from the real world because they are prevented from entering even slightly risky situations, and that this is restricting their personal development. This idea is encapsulated in the following interview extract:

*And it's kind of sad that you can't really get that opportunity to challenge yourself anywhere else in society anymore - everyone's so risk averse. There are so many of these compliance issues in society today - the world is politically correct gone mad! And then you get out there [into the wilderness] and it's crazy - it's dangerous and it's fun! It's fun to be out there with no guy saying that you have to wear a yellow vest and a rope and that you've got to sign in triplicate before you go, and that your boots have got to have cleats on the side - you just do it! Modern society is just so compliance oriented - it's pushing towards the extremes of safety, whereas the Fiordland experience is a real swashbuckling time! You do things that have a high element of risk about them - and that's part of the fun. You just forge your way as you go, and you rely on your own skills and abilities to get you through... It just seems like society now removes all the risk from our lives, and if you don't ever take risks then you never learn anything... you really have to push yourself, and test yourself to learn things. When we go out there, we do some things that we never thought were possible, but we do them because there's no alternative, and afterwards you just think ’wow! I did that!’ (B 196).*
Various aspects of the wilderness setting were regarded as vital for ensuring that the challenge is maintained. Central to this was the belief that wilderness should comprise a large remote area with challenging terrain, unpredictable environmental conditions and an absence of tracks, facilities and other forms of management intervention. Respondents thought that any modifications to these conditions would be likely to detract significantly from their opportunities to experience these challenges. Intrusions on the current wilderness setting would thus be perceived as a major threat to this wilderness value.

### 8.2.2 Wilderness has to be earned

*I think the wilderness experience is something you've got to earn - and in particular you've got to have the skills to be able to achieve that experience and those goals yourself... It really irritates me when I see people who've flown straight in or taken a guide because I feel that that person has not deserved that experience... Those guys probably have no ability, whereas for me to have that experience (gestures to a picture of a previous wilderness trip on the wall), I'd been up there at 7000 feet in a snow storm - I'd walked all the way up there and climbed all the way up myself. I felt like I'd actually got there in a sporting manner - I'd made the effort; I was living in a tent in the snow for days; I deserved that experience because I'd earned it (R 230).*

A crucial feature of wilderness for most study respondents was that it should only be available to people who have the necessary skills and abilities (and the desire to use them). There was a common belief that wilderness visitors should not rely on others to ‘do the hard work for them’, and that access to wilderness should be limited to those who are physically fit, able, and *committed* to undertaking such an experience. As discussed in section 8.2.1, the sense of satisfaction felt after completing a long and challenging wilderness trip is believed to be much more powerful if it is earned through physical endeavour. Respondents thought that sharing the wilderness experience with *only* those who have endured similar hardships served to make the experience many times more satisfying. Conversely, they felt that the knowledge that someone could reach the same area with very little personal effort would be a major detraction from this sense of achievement. An encounter with someone who had ‘cheated’ their way to wilderness (for example through using motorised transport or a commercial guide) would therefore be likely to devalue the experience, and the individual(s) would be regarded with contempt. ‘D’ explained this to me:

> When we were down there [in Fiordland] sea kayaking, pretty much the only other people we saw apart from our group were on commercial fishing charters, and I didn't really feel like we had much in common with those folk. Whereas we bumped into a group of guys on a yacht who had just come up from the Southern Antarctic and they invited us on board, and I kind of felt like we had quite a lot in common with them. I mean we never really talked about it, but we were quite in awe of what they were doing, and they probably thought the same of us - travelling around in these little kayaks and camping on the shore every night - that's pretty hard out! So they probably
looked at us and thought ‘wow, you guys are hardcore!’ and we looked at them and thought ‘wow, you guys are hardcore!’ And so there was kind of a mutual respect between our two groups - we were both out there having an adventure. Whereas we just didn’t feel the same about the guys on the fishing charters, because they weren’t having a similar experience to us; they didn’t have that same level of adventure and commitment (D 007).

A number of respondents expressed concern that if New Zealand wilderness were to lose the element of challenge, the predominant visitor type would start to change, and that this would have serious impacts on wilderness meanings (I will return to this issue in Chapter Nine). Most, however, felt that the existing challenges currently posed by wilderness served to ensure that, on the whole, anyone who was in New Zealand wilderness would have had to work fairly hard to get there, and so would share similar values with the other visitors:

And I think because of that [the challenges and difficulties involved] you get a certain sort of person wanting to go to those sorts of places - people who are really appreciative of those wild and remote places... people who are really interested in getting up close to rugged and wild environments - not the sort of people who just want to pass through; they actually want to fossick round a bit and really make the most of their time there. I think the people tend to be quite resourceful and independent – like us (D 007).

In order to ensure that wilderness can only be fully appreciated by those who are willing to put in the effort and earn it for themselves, maintaining difficult access was seen as a necessity. For most respondents, the philosophy of ‘access by merit’ (which is the way wilderness is currently managed in New Zealand) was the most appropriate way to ensure that this happened: ‘And I think the inaccessibility kind of weeds out those people who aren’t totally committed - you’ve got to really want to get there, and make a real effort to get there’ (B 196). This idea is encapsulated in the following quotation by Garret Hardin (1969, p. 4):

To be precious the heritage of wilderness must be open only to those who can earn it for themselves. The rest, since they cannot gain the genuine treasure by their own efforts, must relinquish the shadow of it.

My respondents saw inaccessibility as a way of ensuring that only those individuals who ‘deserve’ a wilderness experience; only those who are prepared to make the physical effort; to acquire the necessary outdoor skills, and to accept the challenge and the risks involved in such a trip will actually manage to achieve one: ‘A wilderness experience should have very few people, and only people who have got the drive to get themselves into a place like that should be able to go there’ (Diary 332). ‘M’ explained why this was so important to him:

It is a free country, and everybody can go there - if they're prepared to make the effort. But it's not going to be opened up to make it easier for them. It's not going to be covered in tracks and boardwalks and guide ropes and bridges and all that sort of
thing. If people want to experience wilderness, then they have to get themselves - physically and mentally - into the situation where they’re ready to do so (M 244).

A number of interviewees (predominantly New Zealanders) displayed an enormous sense of entitlement and exclusiveness when discussing this topic. For example: ‘Well the fact that I work hard and get off my bum to get into these areas and do those sorts of things means that there's no reason why other people can't. And if they don't want to do that, then they shouldn’t be allowed to go’ (R 195). They spoke of wilderness as if it was their own personal resource, and as if anyone using it should abide by their particular rules of entry. This implies that if people are not seen to be conforming to these social rules, then they are likely to be scorned by traditional users, and characterised as outsiders.

Such views are illustrative of one way in which wilderness users reinforce their beliefs about what wilderness is, or should be. Despite the knowledge that maintaining difficult access may restrict their ability to visit wilderness in years to come, most of the individuals I spoke to felt strongly that this was the only way to guarantee the protection of traditional wilderness values in the future:

And I do pity the poor bugger who wants to get in there but can't because he's not allowed to fly in, but the reality is that you need to get in there and do it while you're young. There's lots of other places you can go if you're not capable of making it into a remote or wilderness area on your own. I have heard old guys complaining that they can't do this or that, can't go in here or there, but I think it's fair enough. Wilderness areas just aren't for everyone (S 152).

When I asked whether they would still feel this way when they were no longer physically fit and able to access wilderness, these respondents assured me that they would – even if it meant they would never be able to experience wilderness first hand again. The selection of responses below illustrates the strength of feeling about this issue:

I'll soon be too old to put in the effort, but there will be others who won’t. And I'll still say that access should be restricted by merit when I’m too old to be able to walk in, because that's the only thing that's protecting those places for the generations to come. I'd far prefer to know that other people who are still able can go in and have the same experience that I used to have, than to be flying in there when I’m ninety! (J 194).

I mean, certainly when I'm old and can't walk, then I won't be moaning about not being able to get in there…. If I broke my legs tomorrow and couldn't ever go there again, then so be it (R 195).

Yep, yes, I would definitely still feel this way if something happened to me and I could no longer access these areas on foot. Absolutely! I completely think that is entirely appropriate for me not to be able to go there if I can’t do it on my own... And
when I get to my elderly stages, I think that's when I'll probably be interested in doing a Great Walk, and having a guaranteed bunk, and things like that (R 140).

Although this view was widely held amongst almost all wilderness participants, there was a very small number who did not agree that access should be restricted by merit, and who believed that it was selfish and elitist to restrict wilderness to a few (e.g. the fit and able) people in society. Respondents who felt this way tended to be older, and were very much in the minority.

8.2.3 Self-reliance

A wilderness experience is about knowing that, as far as resources are concerned, what you've got is pretty much you for the trip - the party is contained in that area, and you can't get any outside assistance or anything... and I think it makes it real - that real feeling of it just being you in that environment (D 007).

The idea of being totally reliant on one’s own skills and resources, and not depending on external supports to survive was frequently mentioned as a core value of wilderness. Self-reliance was described as ‘being prepared for any eventuality’ and ‘having to take responsibility for your own actions’ (Diary 37); ‘You have to make things work out on your own. Help is a long way away’ (Diary 061). There was strong feeling that one should not be able to ‘escape’ from wilderness if things get too hard: ‘You're not being protected; you're not having your hand held and you don't have another choice’ (Diary 061), and that wilderness users should be willing to put in whatever it takes to make it through without calling on outside help: ‘You should feel that you are totally on your own out there and can’t just phone up when you’ve had enough – you’re committed until the end’ (Diary 45). Figure 8.3 shows a research participant living in a self-reliant manner in Fiordland.

‘A’ told me that one of the things he and his companions value most about a wilderness trip is the fact that they are forced to deal with difficult situations, and to rely on their own skills and resources to cope. He recounted a trip he had recently been on in Fiordland where one of his party fell over and ‘gashed his wrist’. ‘You could fold the skin back and it was only a millimetre away from his vein’. He explained that it could have been a very serious situation (given the remoteness of the location and the severity of the injury) but that everything turned out fine ‘because we'd done first aid courses and were fully prepared’:

I like it because you can't run away from the situation - you've got to deal with it. You've got to be prepared for anything to happen - whether it be flooding, getting lost, or someone falling over. If something happens out there then you've just got to deal with it. I suppose - that's what the experience is all about. If you want to go out into places like that, you've got to be ready and prepared to deal with it on the spot (A 258).
Participants viewed wilderness as one of the few settings in the Western world where people really are left to ‘fend for themselves’ and to face the (potentially disastrous) consequences of their actions if they make a poor decision. As noted earlier in this chapter, a number of the people I spoke to felt that many things in life have become ‘too easy’, and have lost the element of challenge and the need for self-reliance. They saw wilderness as a way of maintaining these challenges in society, and a way of forcing people into thoroughly thinking through the implications of their decisions. The essence of self-reliance in wilderness is described in the following quotation:

*Self reliance is about you making decisions about where you need to go and when you're going to stop and what route you're going to take. Where you really feel like you're making the decision and the consequences of not making those decisions, or making a poor decision are going to fall on you. It means that you have a real interest in decision-making - you feel like you're really using your own skills, rather than relying on someone else’s, or on a track that someone else has marked* (D 007).

Some people compared this feeling of self-reliance with other outdoor experiences where they had little or no element of responsibility for their actions. Such experiences were generally
described in a derogative manner, again highlighting the importance for my participants of maintaining the core values of wilderness:

*I mean, on the Milford, it was totally different. You could cheat - people could carry your packs, people would help you along the track and if the weather was bad, DOC would come and rescue you. You just knew that if something went wrong, someone was going to take care of you. This trip was the exact opposite!* (J061).

Several respondents said that they (or people they knew) took deliberate actions to retain the need for self-reliance in wilderness (for example, not taking radios or locator beacons or choosing to travel alone) because they felt that it was such an important feature of a ‘true’ wilderness experience.

The notion of self-reliance and being able to survive without external aid has always been a characteristic of New Zealand society because of its geographical isolation and history as a settler colony. The desire for self-reliance in wilderness was especially evident amongst the New Zealanders in this study. This element of wilderness may therefore be another way in which New Zealanders are able to reinforce aspects of their cultural identity by living in a similar fashion to their ancestors when they first arrived in New Zealand.

In order for wilderness visitors to be fully self-reliant, respondents emphasised the need for them to possess certain skills and attributes; to have built up their experience in other settings, and to be fully prepared for their particular trip. A high level of experience in a wilderness setting was regarded as a prerequisite to such a visit: ‘Yea, it's just so important to have the skills and experience necessary before you visit a remote place like Fiordland’ (D007). It is likely that individuals who are not believed to possess the ‘correct’ skills and experience would be regarded with contempt by traditional users if they were encountered in a wilderness setting.

Ways in which people could gain experience include starting with shorter, easier trips in less remote locations where the element of risk is much smaller: ‘There's lots of places you can go to gain experience before you go to a place like Fiordland - you can spend a day on the tops and see what you think of it; get that little bit of experience and work out what kind of gear you need’ (M244); joining a club that teaches back country and navigation skills (such as a local tramping or mountaineering club): ‘I learned a lot of skills through the [tramping] club, and that enabled me to gain the skills to do long trips on my own in really remote country’ (K323); or travelling with people who are experienced and building up skills by following their lead: ‘the first few times you go into an area like that, you really want to go with experienced
people who've been before. Then over the years you slowly build up your gear and your experience by learning from them’ (A 258). This idea of ‘mentoring’ (passing on skills to younger generations of wilderness users) was particularly common amongst the New Zealanders in this study. It was seen as an important way to share their appreciation of New Zealand’s wild areas, and to pass on the skills and experience they had developed over the years. Most of the experienced New Zealand wilderness users in this study had accompanied less experienced people into the wilderness to teach them the kinds of skills they would require to do such a trip alone. These kinds of trips are an important way in which cultural values and practices are passed down through the generations in New Zealand.

Participants also discussed the necessity of being well-prepared for wilderness – for example, having the right equipment and the right amount of food, obtaining information about the area and the weather conditions and being physically and mentally fit for such an experience. This again was something people could learn about if they travelled with more experienced wilderness users:

We were really well prepared, and you need to be... you need to be. Honestly. You're in a place that's so remote - no-one really knows that you're there and you're days and days away from home (F 134).

Some had been ‘training’ for their trip for several months to ensure that they were in peak physical condition. This was especially so amongst the hunting fraternity:

Those guys who've drawn the Wapiti [hunting] blocks; most of them are out running every night, cycling every night, climbing somewhere every weekend with a heavy pack on... They'll probably spend three or four months training before going in there, just to get fit for those 14 days (R 195).

There was a general agreement that most wilderness users would be sufficiently experienced and well-prepared for such a trip. However, a few respondents expressed concern about some of the overseas visitors they had encountered during their visit who did not appear to possess the skills or the experience required for such a trip: ‘Many of the international visitors we met on the Dusky were hopelessly unprepared if the weather had turned bad for more than one or two days’ (Diary 226); ‘We met a group of seven Israelis who were pretty scared of the wet conditions - they were not so well equipped and prepared’ (Diary 331). Individuals who appeared to be unprepared for wilderness were spoken of disparagingly and in a pejorative manner, as if they had no right to be there. This may have been partly due to fears for their safety, but is more likely to be because they were not following the established New Zealand practice of building up skills and opportunities before visiting wilderness.
In order to ensure that self-reliance remained a core element of the wilderness experience, respondents felt that it was important to have little or no visible management presence. They thought that tracks and facilities generally served to ‘facilitate’ or make the experience easier, and removed the need to ‘work things out for yourself’. As ‘M’ explained:

The whole experience is not having a bridge or a wire or a structure to help you. You have to work out how to do things on your own. You might have to say ‘well it's been raining so we can't get across the river - we have to go back’, and that is the whole experience - the uncertainty and the adventure. Anybody can walk a marked track - the weather might be atrocious, but you can still do it. But then there are other places where it takes a little bit more; where you have to put in that little bit more effort, and that’s what wilderness is all about (M 244).

Any form of management intervention may thus be seen as a negation of the need to be self-reliant, and would likely detract significantly from this key wilderness value. The current management policies - which stipulate no tracks or facilities in wilderness, and few facilities in remote settings – and the recent decision to allow no more commercial tourism in Fiordland wilderness areas thus serve to protect and uphold the notion of self-reliance, and seem to have the strong support of most wilderness users.

8.2.4 Solitude

The importance of solitude and having opportunities to spend time alone (or with a small group of people) in New Zealand wilderness has been discussed in Chapter Seven. Almost all respondents described the absence of people as one of the major reasons for undertaking a wilderness trip, as well as one of the things they valued most about the experience: ‘having no-one else around is just so important to me on that kind of trip’ (Diary 067):

What is it that appeals to me about these experiences? Oh, precisely the fact that you don’t see anybody else. And that was the main reason why we chose the trip that we did – we wanted to move away from the beaten track. I mean, if you walk one of the more popular tracks, people are almost as much of a feature as the scenery! And you don’t want people to be dominating what you do and where you are – wilderness is just not about that (R 068).

The opportunities for solitude were believed to distinguish a wilderness experience from most other recreational pursuits, and respondents felt very strongly about the importance of maintaining this. Individuals who dealt with people every day as part of their job particularly appreciated this aspect of wilderness, and described it as a ‘really refreshing’, ‘valuable’ and ‘precious’. As illustrated in the following extract from an interview with ‘B’, a school teacher:

I mean, I get on well with most people I suppose, but I feel that I can meet people at other times quite easily. And as a school teacher, I’m meeting people all the time anyway. So for me, a wilderness experience is a time when you can get away from what is normally your life and experience a bit of solitude (B 067).
The idea that being away from other people can provide a welcome respite from a typically hectic social life was a common perception: ‘Yea, it’s just such a great break going down there, because you generally don’t see anybody; you don’t hear anybody; you don’t have to deal with anyone else’ (A 258). The solitude experienced by study participants was described as ‘wonderfully rejuvenating’ and ‘completely refreshing’, and spending time alone was seen as cathartic, therapeutic, liberating, energising and invigorating – a time to ‘switch off’, to ‘reflect’, or to ‘recharge the batteries’. Figure 8.4 shows a wilderness participant experiencing solitude in Fiordland.

Figure 8.4: Solitude in the Fiordland wilderness

For those people who were travelling alone, solitude was typically a major reason for undertaking the trip, and was often a highlight of their whole experience: ‘Best moment was having a swim in the lake and drying off in the sun, my only companions a rock wren, a gull, and singing cicadas’ (Diary 323). ‘F’ explained that being away from people gave him the opportunity to feel like an explorer, like an adventurer, and to imagine what it was like when his forbears first arrived in New Zealand. For him, experiencing wilderness alone was a way to experience wild New Zealand in the way his ancestors did:

\[I \text{ don’t want to see anybody when I’m out there. And it’s not because I’m being antisocial. It’s about the fact that you can enjoy the experience a lot more when you feel like you’re exploring somewhere where no man has been before. And even if people have been there before, it just feels like you’re the first person when there’s no-one else around and there’s no evidence of anyone else having been there. You can}\]
kind of think ‘hey, I’m the first guy that’s walked in this valley’, or ‘I’m the first guy that’s seen this rock’, and that’s quite an amazing thing! (F 134).

Despite the fact that very few participants actually completed the whole trip alone, most of them emphasised the importance of having the opportunity to spend time alone in their own thoughts, or with their travel companions - away from other groups. They appreciated the opportunity to be ‘together alone’: ‘I love the isolation and spending time in nature with no-one but our small group’ (Diary 061); ‘I really enjoyed spending quality time with my friends’ (Diary 10); ‘being with friends is just about the best bit of being in the hills’ (Diary 140). The absence of other visitors also enabled them to achieve various personal goals that they believed would not be possible in a more ‘popular’ recreational setting. These included ‘having a break from society’, ‘focusing on the scenery and the environment’, ‘feeling like the first person’, ‘contemplating’ or ‘reflecting on’ issues that were troubling them, and appreciating the entirety of the experience: ‘you really can enjoy the whole experience when there aren’t hordes of other people’ (S 152). Other benefits associated with solitude in New Zealand wilderness have been discussed in Chapter Seven.

Several individuals expressed disappointment if their expectations of solitude were not met, or if their solitude was interrupted - for example through encounters with motorised transport or other groups. Respondent 226, for example, wrote every day in his diary that he was unhappy with the number of people he encountered on his trip because it prevented him from experiencing the solitude he expected, and normally associated with wilderness:

For such a remote area we are surprised at the number of people here. Every night there have been other people in the huts. I am beginning to think that we won't manage a night alone on this trip (Diary 226).

These, and other, wilderness impacts will be discussed further in Chapter Nine.

8.2.5 Escape and ‘getting away’

Well the wilderness experience is pretty unique in the world – it’s a chance to get away from everything, a chance to escape. There are no cell phones, no pressure of work – to be right out there in the middle of nothing is pretty amazing (B 196).

The opportunity to ‘escape’ from society was described as a key reason for visiting wilderness: ‘That’s one of the main reasons why we go on trips like this – it’s kind of a ‘get away from it’, totally different experience from living in a city’ (N 202). In the modern world of globalisation, telecommunications and transport, wilderness was regarded as one of the few places where respondents could actually ‘escape’ from everything. Almost everyone expressed a desire to (or enjoyment at the fact that they were able to) flee from normality for a
while in wilderness, and to be out of contact with ‘civilisation’: ‘no phones, email, work, trivia… being away from everything to do with society’ (Diary 323); ‘getting away from work, from home, from things in life that keep you occupied and busy’ (Diary 202); ‘no cell phones, no phones, no pressure, no things that have got to be done’ (Diary 66). Wilderness was seen to represent a complete contrast to contemporary urban life: ‘It’s just so different to what I normally do – I’m away from the family, I’m away from work, I’m away from everything, and that’s one of the things I like the most about it’ (B 196). It was seen as the exotic ‘other’, and was defined in relation to what it is not (for example, wilderness is not work, bills, noise, telephones and man-made structures). A variety of aspects of modern life were mentioned as things that respondents enjoyed ‘escaping’ from, including work, family, telephones, emails, cars, ‘people impinging on my life’ and general things related to the urban world: ‘Oh I just like to get away from phones, TV’s, radios – all the stuff that clutters up our lives. There’s just something so refreshing about getting away from all of that’ (D 007).

In comparison with wilderness, contemporary urban life was associated with stress and worry. As explained by ‘N’:

*Well this kind of trip is an escape from the day to day reality. You physically transport yourself away so that you actually can’t worry what’s happening back there because there’s no point – because you can’t do anything about it* (N 202).

This idea of escaping from civilisation stems from the early philosophies of wilderness (discussed in Chapter Two), and is embodied in most Western wilderness legislation. Comments such as the one above demonstrate that romantic views of wilderness as a refuge are still upheld by many contemporary New Zealand wilderness enthusiasts: ‘One of the most valuable things for me is that I now have a place so natural and green and wild in my mind that I can return to whenever urban modern life gets to me’ (Diary 45).

Participants believed that the opportunity to escape from society contributed to a range of psychological benefits such as emotional and spiritual development, enhanced peace of mind, feelings of harmony, satisfaction and personal achievement, improved self-confidence and spiritual awareness. It gave them the opportunity to relax, reflect, de-stress and recharge: ‘Spending time in a place like Fiordland gives you a chance to remove yourself from the fast pace of life and see things from a different point of view’ (Diary 332); ‘An experience like this clears your mind, it gives you a reality check and it recharges your batteries’ (Diary 152);

*I’ve never been on a trip that so effectively and completely banished all worries and thoughts of everyday life. Despite the ample thinking time, the totally different environment seems to transport your thoughts outside the ordinary* (Diary 202).
They described the experience as ‘refreshing’, ‘relaxing’, ‘liberating’, ‘rejuvenating’ and ‘energising’:

And just being away from everything is really refreshing. You suddenly find that you don’t really care what the Prime Minister has been up to, or what the latest crazy policy is, or what horrible things are going on out there in the world, because you’re just completely out of it – you’re there in the outdoors and that is your world. You’re just focused on being there at that moment and having that experience (R 230).

Several respondents explained that being away from the pressures and commitments of modern-day life enabled them to ‘strip life down to the bare essentials’ and to ‘focus on the important things that really matter’. Comments such as the one below illustrate the pleasure that wilderness participants derived from returning (at least for a while) to the living conditions that the early pioneers experienced in New Zealand:

Yea – it’s just that feeling of really being alive – it just cuts back to the real basics. It removes you from all the things in modern life that tend to interfere. You’re pretty much focused on where you’re going, where you’re going to camp, and what you’re going to eat! And everything else just isn’t that important anymore (D 007).

Wilderness in this sense can therefore be regarded as an escape from society and an attempt to re-create (or re-live) a highly valued past way of life – a way of maintaining ties with the past.

The absence of outside ‘distractions’ in wilderness also helped to create a sense of ‘timelessness’ which characterised many people’s trips – particularly the longer ones. Participants were able to fall in with the natural rhythms of the environment (for example rising at dawn and sleeping when it got dark). Those who experienced this sensation felt that it enabled them to fully relax and ‘let go’ of any cares or worries. As ‘M’ explained:

I think that the longer you’re away, the less time matters. The days seem to run into each other - you eat when you're hungry, you drink when you come across a stream, when it's dark, you go to sleep, when it's light, you get up. It’s timeless. Time just doesn't mean anything. And that's something that I really enjoy about these trips - you fall into the rhythms of nature and just forget about everything else (M 244).

Several individuals expressed sadness and disappointment at having to return to ‘normal life’ at the end of their wilderness trip. For example, ‘N’ described how accustomed her and her partner had become to the ‘simple life’ they experienced in wilderness:

We mused over our return to civilisation and both agreed that usually by this point in a tramp, you are ready to go, and already savouring that first beer/pizza/ shower. But we both felt sad to be going – it’s surprisingly easy to grow used to, and comfortable with, the peace and isolation. The sound of the first car brought an awful sinking feeling and thoughts of work and other mundane errands crept in (Diary 202).
In order to ensure that the opportunity to ‘escape’ from their every day lives remains part of the wilderness experience, respondents emphasised the need for remoteness, physical isolation, ‘naturalness’ and an absence of other people in a wilderness setting:

*I think the big thing about being able to escape on this kind of trip is the remoteness and the isolation. It means you can be completely and utterly cut off from society for 10 days, and that’s just fantastic* (F 134).

An absence of visible management intervention was also regarded as vital to ensure to ensure the distinction between wilderness and the ‘civilised’ world. This included things like tracks (vegetation clearance, board-walking and track markers), huts, toilets, bridges and other man-made facilities. ‘I think a wilderness experience should have no facilities and no management presence e.g. huts, buildings and tracks’ (Diary 007). Any evidence of human intervention in the wilderness could be seen as a potential reminder of modern life that wilderness users strive to get away from, and is therefore likely to be seen as a threat to traditional wilderness values.

8.2.6 Freedom, adventure and exploration

*Wilderness is about being in the outdoors - having the freedom and space to just be there* (Diary 259).

Wilderness offers people significant opportunities for freedom and flexibility; a chance to be free from many of the rules and regulations which govern much of life in the Western world. In New Zealand, wilderness users are able (within reason/the obvious legal limitations) to do as they please – travel where they like, camp where they like, stop when they like, stay for as long as they like, and visit whenever and wherever they like. Figure 8.5 illustrates the freedom that characterises New Zealand wilderness.

Many respondents commented on the enjoyment they derived from not having their actions constrained by rules and regulations: ‘One of the most rewarding things was having the complete freedom to do as I wished’ (Diary 007); ‘I enjoy the freedom of being able to go wherever I want, take my time and not worry about anything; free from other people’s demands’ (Diary 323). ‘R’ explained why he found trips of a flexible nature so appealing:

*Yea - well for me, trips that have a large element of freedom and flexibility are much more enjoyable. You've roughly got an idea of where you want to go, but within that, you're constantly thinking about what's the best route to do here, 'oh, that route up there looks do-able, but I actually don't feel like scaring myself today, so I'll just do this one'... or 'this river's come up so I am going to have to go over the tops'... and that's a big part of this* (R 140).
This aspect of wilderness served to differentiate these trips from respondents’ everyday lives, where most things are rigidly structured around behavioural norms and strict time frames. It meant that they could be very flexible in their trip planning, and could modify where and when they travelled, based on factors like the weather and how people were feeling. As explained by ‘M’:

*These trips are very flexible - we have no set patterns about where we go during the day, and there's no pressure to be anywhere at any particular time... I mean we take all our gear with us and just keep going and going and then 'oh, I'm feeling hungry!' So we'll stop and eat, or 'oh, this is a nice place - we'll stop here', or 'oh it's a bit dark now, let's look for somewhere to sleep'. And that's the bit I like doing. I don't like having to be at a certain hut at a certain time - we just travel and stop when we like* (M 244).

The absence of rules and regulations also enabled wilderness participants to experience a sense of exploration and adventure which they valued immensely. They enjoyed being able to seek out new places and choose their own route each day, rather than having their movements dictated by a track map or a tour guide. As ‘J’ explained: ‘It's about seeing little unnamed lakes - finding things that aren't on the map, discovering things that perhaps no-one has ever seen before, and that’s so satisfying’ (J 194). Exploring was believed to add an element of mystique and adventure to the experience that enabled wilderness users to truly feel like they were re-tracing the steps of their ancestors, and to identify some of the pleasures (and challenges) that these early explorers felt:
I think that a lot of people go to places like this so they can feel like the only person there – y’know, like it was for the first people in New Zealand. I mean, it's just great to be able to wander along a glacial valley floor and think 'oh wow, I could be the only guy who's ever been here’! It just adds to the experience - being somewhere you think has been unchanged for hundreds of years; like you think, this could be what dinosaurs saw!! [laughs!] ... (F 134).

I guess the key thing is that feeling of perhaps being the first person to ever stand in that particular spot. And that's a really important part of the wilderness experience - discovering these wild bits of country for yourself (J 995).

Comments such as the two above came almost entirely from New Zealanders, perhaps reflecting a desire to explore their country like the early settlers did, and to feel a part of that same experience that they had several hundred years before. If this is the case, then the freedom, adventure, exploration and discovery associated with wilderness is likely to have important cultural value for New Zealanders. This idea is discussed further in Chapter Ten.

In order to maintain the freedom and flexibility inherent in New Zealand wilderness, participants felt that it was imperative to keep visitor numbers low (so that they could still feel like explorers) and to keep management regulation to a minimum (so that their decisions about where and when to travel were not constrained). They believed that any form of rules or regulations about the type or direction of travel in wilderness would detract from this wilderness value. The strength of feeling that many of them displayed towards protecting the element of freedom and flexibility is illustrated in the following response to my question ‘how would you feel if the level of freedom and flexibility was reduced?’:

Oh well if that happened, then I just wouldn't go. I mean it would be completely... it's like the antithesis of what I go into the hills for, so it would be... it would basically take it to the point where it's not even the same thing... it would almost not even be the same sport or hobby for me. I'd put it in a completely different category. I just wouldn't regard it as tramping, because it doesn't really capture those elements (R 140).

There is of course a paradox inherent in this element of wilderness, because maintaining a high level of freedom and flexibility may actually require greater management intervention (for example in the form of permits or entry restrictions) in the future – and this would go against many of the wilderness ideals. Most respondents in this study, however, accepted that in order to protect the wilderness, some managerial regulation of access is necessary: ‘Well at the moment, you can still get in there and go for days without actually seeing a soul, but regulators have to be committed to wanting to preserve that experience’ (R 068). There was no clear agreement on what would be the best way to achieve this though:
I guess there does need to be some kind of regulation to stop too many people going in to these areas. I don't know how you regulate it though. Do you permit only a certain number of people at a time to go in to an area? And in doing that, I suppose you go against many of the values of wilderness, and destroy the opportunity for some people to go in… Yea, I just don’t know (B 067).

The issue of regulating access to wilderness is a complex one. As explained in section 8.2.2, it is currently restricted on a ‘by merit’ basis in New Zealand and the majority of respondents felt that this was the most appropriate way to do so. A number of interviewees also suggested that, in the future, it may be necessary to limit access on the basis of other factors – for example nationality. This discussion is continued in Chapter Nine.

8.2.7 Danger and risk

There’s always that element of risk, and that fear factor involved in a wilderness experience. You never know what’s going to happen the next minute - it’s just so unpredictable down there, but that’s one of the best things about it! (A 258).

Given the remote and challenging location of most wilderness areas, travel within them frequently involves an element of danger or risk. This includes navigating through difficult terrain: ‘the rocks we were hopping across were as big as houses. If you slipped and fell, you would be 15ft down, in a hole, and I don't know how you'd get out. Honestly, it's scary stuff” (F 134); experiencing extreme weather conditions, and walking for lengthy periods in a remote area carrying extremely heavy packs. Danger and fear were omnipresent in respondents’ accounts of their experiences in Fiordland. Many described feeling ‘scared’ or ‘threatened’, ‘vulnerable’, ‘insecure’ or ‘helpless’ because of the ‘wild’ and ‘unforgiving’ conditions. Fiordland was described as ‘daunting’, ‘frightening’, overwhelming and ‘intimidating’; ‘Fiordland is not a place where you can afford to make mistakes, and we definitely felt that a lot. We were constantly thinking, what would the risks of doing this be?’ (D 007); ‘The track is such a tenuous band of safety and if you let go of the handrails, it’s a long way to nowhere’ (Diary 46); ‘I think all three of us really got that feeling that if something went wrong, we were a long way away from help’ (J 061).

Respondents reported a small number of minor accidents and injuries (some more serious than others) that had occurred during their trips, but the theme of danger and risk was more frequently discussed in a positive light. The constant presence of dangerous and risky situations in wilderness (which forces visitors to push themselves beyond their fear boundaries) was seen by everyone as a necessary element of wilderness, and was believed to contribute to the extreme sense of satisfaction felt by most when finishing their trip. This has been discussed at length in section 8.2.1.
For respondents, the key to maintaining this perception of danger and risk in wilderness was to ensure that the remoteness, isolation and the challenges of the physical setting (for example the difficult terrain and weather conditions) are not lost, and that management intervention (particularly in the form of safety features such as bridges and walkways) is kept to a minimum. Any major intervention or developments would thus be likely to have a negative impact on this particular wilderness value.

8.2.8 Experiencing nature on nature’s terms

Another key feature of wilderness for respondents was the opportunity to experience nature on nature’s terms. Despite academic debate over the meaning of ‘natural’ (refer to Chapter Four) participants in this study clearly shared similar views on what it meant in the context of wilderness. For them, natural meant ‘untouched by humans’, (or minimal evidence of human intervention in the landscape), the ‘dominance of wild systems’, and ‘an abundance of flora, fauna and wildlife’. The ‘naturalness’ of the wilderness setting and the absence of visible human interference were seen as defining characteristics of ‘true’ wilderness. As explained by ‘S’:

*And a huge part of wilderness for me is the beautiful environment that hasn’t been touched by the hand of man. It’s pristine bush really – it hasn’t been mowed out like so many areas of the country have been* (S 152).

Fiordland was believed to have many of these important characteristics. It was described as ‘pristine’, ‘untouched’, ‘pure’ and ‘unspoiled’:

*It really is just amazing – it’s just you and the environment. Everything is so fresh and pristine and untouched. You get up onto the tops and look out and there’s nothing but nature all around you – no man-made things as far as the eye can see* (B 196).

Respondents made constant reference to the pleasures of being immersed in nature and being able to experience ‘nature on nature’s terms’. The natural environment was described as ‘cathartic’, ‘calming’ and ‘good for the soul’, and many people used powerful adjectives such as ‘magnificent’, ‘glorious’ and ‘breathtaking’ to describe their experiences in nature: ‘The silence of the natural environment was moving. It was absolutely beautiful – so calm and serene’ (Diary 152).

Underlying many of these comments about the ‘pristine’ New Zealand wilderness was the belief that humans had ‘destroyed’ the natural environment in many parts of the world, and that wilderness was one of the few remaining places where one could still experience what the world used to be like before mankind arrived: ‘And the reason I keep going back to these areas is the fact that there are no tracks, no facilities and no helicopters in there. Basically
they’re kept unchanged’ (R 195). The idea that nature is ‘left alone’ in wilderness had a great
deal of appeal for participants. For them, this was how a ‘real’ wilderness should be.
Although many recognised that, paradoxically, for wilderness to appear natural, it may have
to be subject to a fairly strict management regime, the important thing was that the area
generally appeared natural, and that there was no obvious evidence of human intervention –
such as roads, tracks, huts and other facilities, motorised vehicles and power lines:

360 degree view without a sign of human presence – amazing to look as far as the eye
can see and see no sign of civilisation or human intervention. No planes, no boats no
cars... great (Diary 202).

Interestingly, some participants (almost entirely New Zealanders) expressed pleasure at
encountering evidence of past human use of the Park (for example, old miners tools, historic
huts and the remains of boats associated with the whaling and sealing days). At first glance,
this appears to completely contradict the ‘naturalness’ values that have been discussed in this
section, but it was often the same people who emphasised the need for ‘naturalness’ who also
enjoyed seeing remnants of human history. This suggests that wilderness in New Zealand has
significant cultural and historic (as well as ecological and recreational) value. This discussion
is continued in Chapters Ten and Eleven.

The abundance of native flora and fauna was also important to many New Zealand
participants. They emphasised the value of wilderness as a place where native species are
allowed to flourish as they would have before the first humans arrived in New Zealand:

There’s just so much life in there, a lot of which has been lost from other parts of New
Zealand and which you won’t see anywhere else in the world. I mean, you’ll see Keas
in abundance, you’ll see kakas, you’ll hear kiwi, you’ll see wekas. And they’re just all
interacting with you as you move through the environment (K 323).

New Zealanders who spoke about the natural environment all did so with a great deal of pride,
illustrating the importance of these iconic native species to their cultural identity. Many were
extremely knowledgeable about the types of flora and fauna, and enjoyed identifying or
learning about the different species that they came across: ‘Rock wrens are a feature of the
country around here, all the boulder fields are good rock wren habitat’ (Diary 323), and
‘Earina autumnalis’ is in full flower and you can smell it from 50m out on the water. Saw a
late flowering southern rata too’ (Diary 332). Several commented on the condition of the
vegetation, the suitability of various habitats for certain types of wildlife, illustrating a keen
interest in conservation and protecting New Zealand’s indigenous species: ‘Heaps of birdsong
today – a healthy back country sign’ (Diary 202), and ‘Plenty of birdlife – tits, bellbird, keas
etc. Vegetation all in good order... young broadleaf prominent up to 0.5m’ (Diary 995). As
discussed in Chapter Two, native New Zealand species are a source of national pride because they are endemic to New Zealand and serve to distinguish the country from anywhere else in the world. The fact that wilderness areas are seen as places where such species are able to flourish serves to further increase the value of wilderness to New Zealanders.

Respondents attributed a significant number of personal benefits to the ‘naturalness’ of the wilderness setting. Being exposed to, and immersed in, the natural environment meant that they were forced to cope with situations which they would normally be ‘protected’ and ‘sheltered’ from in a typical urban setting. As explained by ‘M’:

> At home, you just jump in the car and drive to work when it's raining and you think 'oh, it's a nuisance, it's raining', but out there, it's a bit different. You think 'oh, it's raining. Is it heavy rain?' And if it is, you might have to change your plans, or you might have to be more careful crossing the rivers and that sort of thing... You just don't notice that sort of thing when you're at home because you can just go inside and get away from it, but out there it's different (M 244).

They enjoyed being ‘immersed’ in nature and being able to appreciate many of the facets of the natural environment that they would normally miss out on:

> And one of the things I value most is just noticing the simple things that you see all the time but never notice when you're at home - like the sunset and the sunrise, the good weather, the bad weather... all that just becomes much more real when you're out there (M 244).

Feelings of contentment, relaxation and rejuvenation were frequently attributed to the wilderness environment, despite the hardships and challenges participants had to go through to be able to realise these. As ‘J’ explained:

> The whole experience is just so refreshing – so energising. Even though it’s such hard yakker, you come out fit and refreshed. It might have been a really hard 2 weeks, but you come out just pinging! And I don't know why that is...it must be the whole environment, because if I go on an exercycle or go to the gym and have the same kind of physical work-out, I never feel like I do when I come out of there! (J 194).

The natural surroundings also had the potential to trigger intense feelings and emotions:

> There's something about the environment that really affects you on an emotional level... you're literally staggered by it. Literally - you get a wonderful sunset, and the shapes, the shadows and clouds over the landscape and the sun's going down and you're at an alpine campsite. It's just absolutely magical stuff (K 323).

Respondents were often left in complete awe of their surroundings because of the size, scale and power of the environment:

> You feel pretty privileged to be there – you realise that you’re just a little dot in a huge area... It’s just unreal country – big, vast and unchanged. It’s hard to describe the
beauty and power of the wilderness. Such a humbling experience to be in there (Diary 196).

They described these encounters with nature as ‘powerful spiritual moments’, when they felt closer to some higher power – a feeling which many found difficult to express:

Yea – it’s a kind of a spiritual feeling that I think you're much more likely to get through a wilderness experience. It doesn't have to be about religion or anything, but just the realisation that there's something greater than us out there - some energy or some air, that I'm just a very small part of... And it's just such a fulfilling experience... it's really hard to put your finger on it and explain it! There's just something, and you know when you've experienced it that it is something really special (D 007).

A number of individuals also discussed the way in which they were able to feel like part of the landscape. They described the multi-sensory and two-way interactions they experienced with the natural environment and felt that ‘becoming one’ with nature was a crucial element of a ‘real’ wilderness experience. Figure 8.6 illustrates one way in which wilderness visitors immersed themselves in the natural environment in Fiordland.

Figure 8.6: Wilderness camping in Fiordland

Respondents contrasted this with other recreation experiences where they simply felt like they were observing their surroundings, and used this to emphasise the value of wilderness: ‘I really enjoyed feeling like we were part of the landscape and not just passing through’ (D 007);

It’s that feeling of really becoming part of your environment. You tend to make friends with the elements you find in there - like on that trip there were a lot of rock wrens, and they're quite friendly beasts - they'll come out and check you out, and you interact with them and they'll seem like your friends (K 323).
Second year for John in Fiordland. I can see he has been bitten by her and fits right in. Not hard to tell when a person fits in with Fiordland, they are like an overfed pup – very content and don’t stop smiling (R 195).

Comments such as these highlight the importance of becoming ‘involved’ in the wilderness environment – of developing deep connections with nature, and not just observing it as a separate entity.

The feeling of being attuned with the environment was especially evident amongst the hunters in this study. For them, this was an integral part of any wilderness hunting experience because of the need to be acutely aware of their surroundings in order to successfully track deer. They felt that connecting with the environment in this way enabled them to have a much more holistic and ‘real’ wilderness experience:

You’ve simply got to be in tune with that environment - you've got to outwit the deer, you've got to outwit the wind, you've got to outwit the terrain - and everything's happening all at once (J 194).

When you're hunting, you see everything. You're always looking in the bush for any changes, right down to the weather, the wind shifts - the whole lot. And that's why I do think that you feel like you're a part of the environment. Hunters just get that little bit extra from a trip like this - that second sense that you have to develop to be a good hunter. Because you notice everything - you have to (R 195).

Respondents felt that these connections with nature also enabled them to derive significant socio-psychological benefits from the experience. Many thought that the practice of immersing themselves in nature enabled them to ground themselves in reality and to ‘gain a clearer perspective on life’; to ‘realise their place in this world’. They described it as a really ‘healthy’ and ‘humble’ experience that would be difficult to replicate outside natural environments. As explained by ‘D’ and ‘J’:

Well I think that it's really important for people to connect with nature and to experience nature on nature's terms. It's a really valuable experience for people because it's just so important for you to understand your place in the whole grand scheme of things... it's that whole 'wow, I'm only one small dot here, and look at all of this around me'... I think there's that sense of awe and wonderment that there's something making all this happen - that there's some power or force that's greater than me or humans (D 007).

‘J’ found that being immersed in the natural environment for such a length of time had enabled him to test his physical and mental capabilities and to develop a greater awareness of his ‘place in the world’:

I think that if you just stay in the urban environment, you'll never realise those limits [that nature imposes]. Certainly having a wilderness experience is a very self-reflecting time and you realise how you are just one piece of nature and that
ultimately you have to work within nature's laws... It definitely provides a better perspective on how society works (J 061).

The intense connections with nature were discussed most frequently by New Zealanders. For them, becoming ‘involved’ (physically and mentally) in wilderness, reflected a long-held Kiwi tradition of connecting with the land, and they were proud to be able to continue this tradition through wilderness visits: ‘Wilderness tramping denotes a particular relationship with the land and how we move with and through it’ (Diary 140). The New Zealand landscape was seen as part of who they are, and being able to become part of this through wilderness was a very valuable cultural experience:

And I think part of it is understanding how what you see on the map is related to what you experience on the ground. You look at a map and you don't just see a dotted line - you look at the lie of the hills and the contour lines to work out how steep it's going to be, what kind of vegetation you're likely to encounter. And that's what wilderness is about for me (J 995).

In discussions about contact with nature in wilderness, respondents emphasised the importance of maintaining the (apparent) ‘naturalness’ of the setting. They felt strongly that natural systems should dominate in wilderness, and the landscape should have minimal signs of human interference. Management intervention (such as huts, tracks, signs and bridges) would be likely to detract from perceptions of naturalness, and may reduce the chances of feeling like the area is ‘pristine’ or ‘unchanged’. Similarly, any forms of non-natural noise (such as aircraft or other types of motorised transport) are likely to detract from feelings of being at one with nature, and would be likely to reduce the chances of achieving spiritual connections with the natural environment. As noted earlier, however, it is the perception of naturalness that is of utmost importance to wilderness users. Therefore, some forms of management intervention which are believed to contribute to this goal (such as weed or pest control) may be acceptable. In addition, some forms of human influence (for example, historical evidence of past human habitation) may have cultural importance, which may surpass the need for complete ‘naturalness’.

The importance that New Zealand respondents placed on becoming immersed in the wilderness environment implies that trips where people do not achieve this (for example, short trips or trips using mechanical aids) be regarded with contempt because they do not represent ‘true’ wilderness. Connecting with the wilderness environment (physically and mentally) is clearly a very important part of the experience – especially for New Zealanders.
8.3 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the core values that participants associated with New Zealand wilderness. These eight values were discussed the most frequently, by the most people, and with the most passion and enthusiasm. In broad terms, the identification of these values confirms much of what existing research tells us – for example, that wilderness visitors are seeking challenge and escape in a remote and natural environment. However, this study goes beyond these simplistic descriptions of what motivates people to visit wilderness, and what benefits they derive from it. The findings presented in this chapter describe and explain the meanings behind these values and, in doing so, help us to understand why they are so important to wilderness users.

At the individual level, wilderness can be regarded as a personal challenge - an arena in which people can test their physical and mental capacities, and achieve significant personal benefits. It is also somewhere where one can escape from modern society for a short time, and return to a simpler way of living. Wilderness in New Zealand offers those who are willing to dedicate the required time and effort, significant opportunities for freedom, solitude, intense spiritual connections with nature and considerable personal development. On a more profound level, the findings in this chapter have indicated that wilderness in New Zealand may also be an expression of cultural identity - a reflection of a past way of life. Many of the practices and activities described by respondents demonstrate a keen appreciation of (and a desire to connect with) this historical past. Wilderness is something which is believed to distinguish New Zealand from the rest of the world, and something for which Kiwis are extremely proud. Further, wilderness provides New Zealanders the opportunity to practise activities and skills which have been fundamental to their country’s short existence as a pioneering colony.

An overriding theme running through this chapter is that the wilderness participants (and in particular, the New Zealanders) in this study have deep attachments to wilderness – as a concept and a place, and have developed strong views on what is and what is not appropriate in a wilderness setting. These ideas about wilderness are partly based on their own intuitive assessments of wilderness (including previous visits), but are also heavily influenced by information they have learned from external sources such as friends, guide books, images and the popular media. Wilderness in New Zealand is commonly portrayed as spectacularly beautiful, untouched and devoid of humans and physical development. It is also typically understood as something which serves to distinguish New Zealand from other countries – something unique and precious, of which New Zealanders should feel very proud.
The next chapter in this thesis examines participants’ fears and concerns about the future of New Zealand wilderness. When reading this chapter, it is important to bear in mind the historical and cultural values of wilderness that have been discussed here.
Chapter 9

Threats to New Zealand Wilderness

9.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that, for the participants in this study, New Zealand wilderness is a unique concept, to which they attribute particular meanings and values which are based on widely understood core images (such as devoid of people and highly natural). Discussions in Chapter Eight also indicated that there are certain activities and features (such as man-made facilities and motorised transport) that are not considered appropriate in wilderness – because they would likely detract from these values. New Zealand wilderness, as a place and a concept, has thus become ‘actualised and endowed with meaning’ about what is appropriate, where and when (Shields 1991, p. 60). These ideas about wilderness, however, are not static. They are shifting, and continually being re-created as a result of changes both within and beyond wilderness – changes such as globalisation, population increase and developments in the tourism industry. Participants were aware of this, and expressed concern that their traditional understandings of wilderness may be ‘watered down’ or lost in the future as a result of such changes. Factors they believed to be threatening New Zealand wilderness included escalating numbers of visitors, increasing tourism, improved access to wilderness and the growing use of technology. These changing conditions were thought to influence wilderness values in various ways, such as compromising feelings of remoteness and isolation, reducing the feeling of being alone in nature, diminishing the sense of achievement that comes from using one’s own skills and abilities to overcome challenges and also by altering people’s perceptions of what wilderness means.

This chapter unravels these ideas and explores the various concerns about wilderness that participants identified. It combines data from the research diaries and all three sets of interviews (wilderness users, managers and tour operators). The chapter is divided into four parts. Part one details concerns about increasing visitors to wilderness. The second part explores participants’ fears about increasing international tourism and looks in particular at the issue of resentment towards wilderness visitors from overseas. Part three of the chapter examines how commercialisation may affect New Zealand wilderness. Finally, part four looks at the potential impact of new technologies on wilderness values, with a particular focus on aircraft and improved access.
9.2 Increasing visitors and increasing use

*It seems that the increasing use of protected natural areas may pose a real threat to wilderness in New Zealand. Because you have to ask yourself what makes the wilderness area special? And one of the things that does make it special is the fact that there are no people there. Otherwise it's simply not a wilderness area. It's a tourist resort (B 067).*

As reported in Chapter Eight, one of the most important (and the most distinguishing) features of New Zealand wilderness is the absence of people who visit wilderness. Many of the benefits participants which associated with their experiences (such as solitude, self-development and developing relationships) were dependent on them encountering few other people in wilderness. It follows that one of their main concerns about the future of wilderness was an increase in visitors, which they felt may change the nature of the setting irreversibly and, in doing so, cause many of the unique values to be lost.

Although most of the current reported\(^{94}\) growth in visitor numbers to New Zealand conservation land has taken place in more accessible areas, many of the people I spoke to believed that some level of increase is also occurring (and is likely to continue) in the more remote areas. ‘F’ said that he had seen a substantial growth in the number of people going into wilderness in recent years and felt that this was likely to reduce his chances of having a ‘true’ wilderness experience in the future:

> Well I think what you're seeing in the last 25-30 years that I've been going into the wilderness - and definitely down in Fiordland. There are just more and more people going into the wilderness and it's getting harder and harder to find areas where you don’t bump into people (F 134).

A small number of respondents (primarily the tour operators, but also some recreationists) did not believe that visitor numbers to wilderness were ever likely to increase dramatically - because of the challenges, difficulties and amount of time involved in undertaking such a trip and the fact that most people would prefer to view wilderness ‘from the sidelines’. ‘R’, an experienced wilderness hunter, explained why he felt this way:

> No, I'm not really concerned about increasing visitor use of wilderness areas, because the trampers - the foreigners - really tend to stick to the publicised walking tracks with the nice huts and things. I've never EVER run into a foreigner - a trumper - during my hunting trips. The only people you might meet off track are the hunters (R 230).

\(^{94}\) As noted in Chapter Five, there is very little visitor use data available for Remote and Wilderness Areas, and no accurate way of telling whether use has been increasing in these areas.
Despite this, by far the most common view amongst respondents was that visitor numbers to wilderness were increasing and that this was a cause for concern. It is these views which will be the focus of this section.

**Erosion of traditional values**

The main fear associated with an increase in visitors to wilderness was that it would fundamentally alter existing wilderness meanings through the erosion of many traditional values. Most participants were of the firm belief that if visitor numbers to wilderness were to increase even slightly, then there would be fewer opportunities for solitude and introspection; more distractions; less opportunity to focus on important elements of the experience or to become involved in the environment and more potential for crowding, conflict and displacement (to be discussed in more detail later in this chapter). They overwhelmingly agreed that there is a level of use beyond which the quality of wilderness diminishes – and that the threshold for this is particularly low in very remote areas. Despite the fact that encounters with other visitors were relatively infrequent in Fiordland, several respondents indicated that the number of people they met during their trip had affected their ability to experience values such as solitude, freedom and exploration: ‘The number of people (especially the group of seven) significantly detracted from my experience of this beautiful wilderness area’ (Diary 41). Some questioned whether their visit could be called a ‘wilderness’ trip because of the number of other visitors they had encountered:

> Over the last 2 days I have concluded that this is not really a wilderness experience – there are just far too many people. The place is fantastic - big, stunning, beautiful and remote and I feel privileged to have visited. But it is not, by my thoughts, wilderness

(Diary 225).

**Increasing human impact**

Biophysical impacts were also predicted to become more prevalent with any growth in visitor numbers to wilderness. Impacts identified by respondents included tracking, footprints, old campsites, track markers, vegetation damage, wildlife disturbance, littering and pollution of water courses and the introduction of invasive species such as didymo and giardia:

> And another big threat is the environment being destroyed in some way by didymo, giardia, the introduction of pests and all that... I mean, I love walking into an area where you can drink the water from the creek, whereas in 10 years with more people coming into these areas, you might be thinking 'well I can't go in there now because it's so polluted'. And that would be awful, it really would (F 134).

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95 Didymo and giardia are invasive species which have been introduced to New Zealand from overseas and are threatening the country’s unique ecosystem. For more information on these (and other) invasive species, refer to [http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/threats-and-impacts/biosecurity/](http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/threats-and-impacts/biosecurity/).
Figure 9.1 illustrates some of the types of human impacts that research participants were concerned about in Fiordland. They felt that such impacts would affect the ‘natural’ values of the wilderness setting by introducing human elements. As ‘R’ explained, this effect is likely to be felt more strongly in wilderness than in other recreational settings because of the expectation that the area should appear natural:

Well it bothers me a lot more if I come across more evidence of other people than I was expecting. So, if I see some home-made markers in a recreation area near where I live, it’s not an issue because I know that’s what you’ve got to expect there. But when I go to somewhere like a wilderness area, as I did last year, and found markers tied to trees and permanent ground trails - then it is extremely disappointing (R 140).

Some respondents thought that the biophysical impacts of increased use had already reached the point at which they were affecting wilderness values in certain areas of Fiordland. As respondent 45 noted with reference to the Dusky Track:

The track has so much devastation across it – the worst sections of human disturbance. Thousands of footprints all resulting in a quagmire... It didn’t have a feeling of wilderness - more like a piece of ground which had held a 3 day festival (Diary 45).

Several New Zealanders also expressed concern that more evidence of human impact would prevent the area from feeling ‘unchanged’ and ‘like it used to be’, and would reduce the opportunities for them to experience wilderness like their forbears did.
**Increased track and facility development**

A number of participants feared that an increase in visitors would create more demand for tracks and facilities, which would lead to the development of areas that are currently unmodified):

> I think one of the biggest threats to the wilderness experience is development on the ground - upgrading smaller tracks; new tracks; new and larger huts, and the development of places that aren't currently developed (K 323).

Such developments, they believed, would detract from wilderness values such as naturalness, escape and challenge. As explained in Chapter Eight, the introduction of new facilities was regarded as an intrusion in wilderness because it would serve to make the experience ‘easier’ and less ‘authentic’, or less like a ‘traditional’ New Zealand wilderness experience:

> And so the consequences of increasing visitors and more impacts are that they [managers] put in boardwalks. And then that just changes the experience because it just doesn’t feel quite so much like a wilderness experience when you’re walking along main highway tracks (N 202).

When asked whether they thought this kind of development was ever realistically likely to happen in wilderness, respondents were convinced that it was a possibility. They gave examples of other areas of Fiordland where park managers had developed new tracks to cope with increasing demand and where this had subsequently affected the wilderness values of the area. One example was the Kepler Track, which was designed as an overflow track from the Milford and the Routeburn tracks, but which now receives a similar level of use without having achieved the goal of reducing visitor numbers on the original tracks (Interview: Gavin Walker, Department of Conservation). Another example was the Humpridge Track in Southern Fiordland which was developed in the late 1980s in response to the restructuring of the forestry service (Tuatapere Humpridge Track n.d). The track was built in an area which had no previous development and which was regarded as a unique setting with wilderness values. ‘K’ explained to me how he felt that it ‘destroyed’ the wilderness values of the area:

> Well the development of the Humpridge Track really offended me. The track was a new development in an area that had no development at all. And it was one of my special places - just a tussock ridge, with big tors and tarns. It was where the human development of the Southland plains stopped. You could turn around and look west and you just saw what looked to be untouched Fiordland - completely covered in natural vegetation. And for that development to appear right on the crest of that ridge

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96 This would not be possible in designated wilderness areas in New Zealand because the current legislation prevents any new developments. However, in areas with wilderness character that are zoned ‘remote’, this is a possibility.
was just terrible. I haven't been back there since, because it really just destroyed the experience I used to have there (K 323)."

Several respondents believed that the ‘managerial obsession’ with the health and safety of visitors to national parks in New Zealand was causing unnecessary track and facility development, which was likely to detract from wilderness values in the future. As explained by ‘M’:

\[\text{And so development in these areas is such a threat... The thing I've got a pet hate against is little safety things - like DOC will put a step where there's a tricky spot, or a boardwalk across a muddy section - but we don't need things like that! They don't need to be there...} \ (M 244).\]

A number of participants viewed such interventions as the ‘beginning of the end’ for wilderness. They believed that initial developments in the name of safety would necessitate the construction of more elaborate safety features, which would require more development, would eventually be the death of the wilderness:

\[\text{...The little things will happen - y'know, 'there's a dangerous crossing, so we'd better fix that in case somebody gets injured because we're flying tourists in there now and we can't have them injured, so we'll fix that by putting a bridge across it - but that'll be it. And oh, we'd better to this one as well while we're there, and oh, here's another one we might as well do'. So it's just a foot in the door and then there's a stampede. It's happened to all the parks up North, and it could quite easily happen down here as well...} \ (M 244).\]

In contrast, a few respondents felt that the removal of existing huts and facilities was a threat to wilderness. ‘R’ explained that a certain level of facilities in wilderness can enable wilderness trips, rather than constrain them:

\[\text{And conversely, wilderness values are under threat from the removal of facilities in some places, because there are places where a well-placed bridge does actually create scope for a wilderness trip} \ (R 140).\]

People who felt this way were all New Zealanders and tended to be users of facilities that the Department of Conservation had removed (or was intending to remove). They argued that the removal of these facilities posed a safety risk to people travelling in those areas because they provided essential shelter in case of emergencies: ‘Some of those structures are real life-savers - a little hut in the middle of no-where is just a real blessing’ (C 321). Their frustration,

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\text{97 According to DOC's National Concessions Manager, this scenario is much less likely to happen in the future because the Department's management strategies have changed (Interview: Gavin Walker, Department of Conservation).}
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\text{98 In 2004 the Department of Conservation undertook a major review of all the tracks and facilities it managed. The purpose of this review was to decide which facilities to continue investing in and which ones to stop maintaining (primarily due to low use). The whole process was very controversial and many of the older historic huts which were receiving very low use were suggested as those which should be no longer maintained. The full document is available in pdf format from http://www.doc.govt.nz/upload/documents/getting-involved/consultations/consultations-results/national-overview.pdf.}
\]
however, appeared to be rooted in a belief that the Department of Conservation was focusing excessively on funding recreation opportunities in the ‘touristy’ areas, at the expense of wilderness. These respondents expressed annoyance at what they saw as the unfair channelling of government funding towards front country areas (which are predominantly the realm of international tourists), rather than towards protecting wilderness recreation opportunities:

> And I’m just disappointed that DOC has ripped some of the smaller huts out and then spent a lot more money upgrading all the big huts and making them a much better standard, with gas stoves and all the gear - mainly for the tourists (F 134).

It may seem somewhat contradictory that the very same people who did not want to see the development of more facilities in wilderness, also complained about facilities being removed. However, respondents who expressed these conflicting views believed that it was not the maintenance of existing facilities that would attract more visitors, but the development of new facilities. ‘F’ explained this to me:

> But we’re not talking flash new huts; we’re talking the old deer-stalkers huts - It could just be a lean-to; a little piece of corrugated iron, a roof and a door - nothing flash... And they don’t get a lot of use, but they’re there for those people who prefer to walk off the main trails and who don’t want to stay in a hut with 20 or 30 other people (F 134).

This resistance to the removal of facilities which already exist in wilderness is reminiscent of the ‘last settler syndrome’, discussed in the context of outdoor recreation by Nielsen, Shelby & Hass (1977). The theory proposes that recreationists (settlers) want their chosen recreation sites to remain in the exact condition which they found them and that any alterations to this ‘norm’ (whether it involves further development or the removal of existing facilities) will lead to dissatisfaction. In other words, ‘the most recent settler wants to be the last settler’ (White 1971). Comments from respondents in the current study suggest that the removal of facilities they have become accustomed to may pose just as much of a threat to existing wilderness meanings as the development of new facilities - because they would mean a change from the status quo. Removing these facilities may prevent traditional users of these areas from undertaking the trips they used to do and so part of the human history they associate with New Zealand wilderness would be lost. These concerns were expressed in a recent article in Wilderness Magazine which read:

> Sadly, through lack of Government funding, many of the more remote huts and tracks in New Zealand are falling into disrepair. As tracks become overgrown, huts become cut off and as user numbers drop, so do Department of Conservation management priorities. As the huts become derelict and are removed, the human history of our
rugged back country disappears – along with the opportunity to explore some of the South Island’s most beautiful mountain regions

(‘Track volunteers’ 2009)

Attitudes such as these imply that any changes to existing wilderness meanings (particularly if they are thought to be benefiting ‘new users’, or to the detriment of existing wilderness users) are likely to be viewed with suspicion and anger.

In discussions about the increasing use of wilderness, it became clear that participants were often more concerned about increasing international visitors’ use of these areas than increasing visitation per se. There was a general feeling that New Zealanders’ use of the wilderness resource was either decreasing or remaining at a constant level, while international visitors’ use was increasing significantly:

Well the number of wilderness users is not tracking up at an even mix of international trampers and New Zealanders. It's essentially the same level of users from New Zealand, with international trampers adding on top. And in some places, it's actually displacing or reducing the number of people from New Zealand who go there (R 140).

Comments related to this issue again highlighted the fear of change inherent in many of the discussions about the future of New Zealand wilderness. The following section presents findings related to this issue.

9.3 Increasing international tourism

Those of us who learned to travel safely through our wilderness in our youth 30-40 years ago rarely encountered visitors from overseas. Now the network of huts and tracks and the vast backdrop of unspoilt wilderness is an irresistible magnet for hundreds of thousands of foreign backpackers who appreciate only too well that the world’s wilderness is shrinking everywhere except in New Zealand… at least for now. So in some areas, the Kiwis are very much a minority. Does this really matter? Perhaps not to DOC or the NZ Tourism Board, but ask most local trampers why they no longer frequent these areas and they are likely to say it is because of the loss of solitude and the crowds of overseas visitors who make them feel like strangers in their own country. (Molloy & Potton 2007, p. 314-315)

The above quotation is taken from a recent publication entitled ‘New Zealand’s Wilderness Heritage’. It reflects the views of many of the New Zealanders who took part in this research. In their eyes, the New Zealand wilderness is a precious resource which belongs to Kiwis, and needs to be protected for future generations of young Kiwi adventurers. ‘Foreign tourists’ are often regarded as an unwelcome intrusion on (and threat to) wilderness as they know it.

Although figures suggest that most international visitors currently tend to visit the more popular and more easily accessible areas of conservation land, over one third of the
participants in this study (25 out of 67) were from overseas. This supports respondents’ and managerial concerns (discussed in Chapter Five), that the more remote areas are increasingly becoming the preserve of international visitors. Many of the New Zealanders I spoke to felt that increasing international tourism was causing problems on conservation land such as crowding, conflict and displacement and this was impacting on (or was likely to impact on) wilderness values. Although a small number of overseas participants in this study expressed surprise at the absence of New Zealanders they met on their trip, the issue of increasing international tourism was mostly discussed by New Zealand respondents. For this reason (and also because all but one of my interviewees were from New Zealand), I will present only the views of New Zealanders in this section.

In general, respondents felt that international tourism to New Zealand conservation land was on the increase: ‘And even over the nine years that I’ve been tramping, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of international visitors to the conservation estate’ (R 140), and that this could have a major impact on the availability of ‘true’ wilderness in the future:

*I mean, the impact of increasing international tourism could be huge – it’s going to mean a hell of a lot more people trying to get an experience out of the same resource. I think that eventually there just won’t be enough of it to share out* (S 152).

A number of participants spoke passionately against this growth, fearing that it would destroy traditional wilderness meanings. These sentiments are illustrated in the following quotations:

*wilderness areas should not be full of foreign 'hikers' out 'to do' a certain area. This sounds terribly xenophobic but part of tramping is a cultural experience, not just an environmental one, and foreign hikers and crowding destroys this experience and destroys back country culture* (Diary 140).

*And something I really wouldn't want to see in wilderness is parties of Japanese tourists coming along every second day and getting taken up onto the tops so they can get some photos of them standing there with all the mountains behind them, saying 'look, here I am on top of the mountains'* (R 230).

New Zealanders expressed sadness, frustration and disappointment when describing how they felt about the growing number of international visitors using conservation land: ‘I spoke to one of the hut wardens and he said that it’s only about 20 per cent - twenty per cent - Kiwi on the Great Walks! Twenty per cent?!’ (F 134)⁹⁹;

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⁹⁹ The low numbers could be primarily attributed to the high cost of accommodation on the Great Walks. However, in July 2008, the Department of Conservation announced that children and teenagers under the age of 18 would no longer have to pay fees to stay in Great Walk huts and campsites in New Zealand. The then Minister of Conservation (Hon. Chris Carter) said that the main reason for this decision was ‘to ensure that, as our country becomes more urbanised, young people continue to be able to experience our magnificent outdoors that helped to shape our national identity’ (New Zealand Parliament 2007).
I was saddened at Lake Roe to see the hut book full of foreign names. This was no surprise to me, but I can’t help but feel that a certain part of me is being eaten away. I spend 80-100 days a year in the back country all over New Zealand. I regard the hills as my special place and am happy to share my love of the hills with like-minded people in clubs etc. but I feel that these people are eroding our backcountry values that many of us hold dear. I feel like a stranger in my own house when I read these hut books (Diary 140).

‘S’, an avid wilderness user, said that ‘too much immigration and tourism’ was going to ‘ruin the wilderness experience quicker than anything’ (S 152). And other participants used derogatory terms such as ‘foreigners’, ‘tourists’ ‘bloody tourists’ or ‘bloody Germans’ to describe international visitors.

As noted earlier, the root cause of this resentment towards international visitors appeared to be a belief that their presence would alter traditional wilderness meanings. Many of the perceived threats to wilderness discussed in this chapter (such as littering, vegetation damage and the increasing use of motorised transport) were attributed to ‘overseas tourists’ or ‘foreigners’, rather than to the outdoor recreation population as a whole. A common fear expressed by respondents was that international tourists would bring their own values and ideas about wilderness to New Zealand and that these values would be very different to those of a typical New Zealand wilderness user. They felt that this would have the secondary effect of displacing New Zealanders into more remote areas, in search of the traditional wilderness experience they are used to. The specific ways in which international visitors were thought to be threatening New Zealand wilderness are the focus of the following section.

9.3.1 Changing the nature of wilderness
Many of those interviewed felt that international visitors simply did not (or did not want to) understand New Zealand back country culture, and would therefore be likely to alter the nature of wilderness if they were to arrive in any great numbers. In wilderness settings, where the comportment of other users is such an important element of the experience, this could have serious implications. One particular respondent (a highly experienced New Zealand tramper) wrote at length about his views on international tourists in his trip diary – sometimes devoting whole pages to the topic. His comments suggested strongly that the ‘foreign trampers’ he had encountered had detracted significantly from his visit because of the way in which they used the hut and track system. He felt that they did not have sufficient understanding of the New Zealand back country culture and used the tramping huts like youth hostels which – much to his anger and frustration - was changing the nature of his wilderness in a detrimental way. Below is extract from his trip diary. The resentment he felt towards the
‘foreigners’ he encountered is clearly evident in both the language he used and the pejorative way he described their behaviour:

**Day Three:** We were joined later in the afternoon by four foreign trampers. This was disappointing but I guess not unexpected. They had little to say to us and the conviviality found in back country huts was replaced with the youth-hostel feeling that pervades many front country areas. We listened to them discussing people that had met at other walks around New Zealand. Needless to say, their only North Island experience was the Tongariro crossing and since then they had done the Wangapeka, the Homer Pass, the Rees-Dart etcetera etcetera. So they fit into the second category of foreign people. They had moved beyond the great walks (because of price?) and had made what were once back country areas their free accommodation…. My own special parts of NZ are shrinking like back country culture… (Diary 140).

When I interviewed ‘R’, I asked him to explain what he meant when he wrote this. He told me that there are many subtle behavioural rules and sub-cultural meanings and practices that need to be understood in order to have a ‘successful’ or ‘true’ New Zealand wilderness experience but that most international visitors are not aware of, or do not understand the importance of, these behavioural norms (these include, for example, developing an appreciation for the wilderness environment, and learning how to operate physically and socially within this environment)\(^\text{100}\). As a result, he felt that they are often unaware of how to behave in a socially appropriate way for a wilderness setting:

> Well I just think that they [international visitors] are different and they don’t have the same understanding of how to use our back country. I think that the ideals of self reliance and carrying your map and compass and finding your own way just aren’t there. For them, it’s more about ‘here’s a track to a destination - lets walk to the destination and tick it off in the book and then drive to the next place and do the same thing again’. For me, this isn’t the way to use our back country… I guess it just doesn’t accord with how I think about it - something resonates with me… I don’t think that they understand the cultural aspect of the back country, as they ‘love the tracks to death’, or do benched, shingles, homogenised experiences like the Routeburn and the Milford. They do not understand our back country values. ‘Hiking’, ‘trekking’ or ‘trail hiking’ are NOT synonyms for tramping (R 140).

This belief was fairly common amongst New Zealand interviewees: ‘I sometimes wonder if the foreign people respect wilderness in the same way as us… I mean you hear them talk about all sorts of places they compare it to and it’s not really the same at all’ (F 134);

> Oh well I know they [international tourists] are different from personal experience. You can tell when you see them that they don’t have as much of an appreciation of the natural environment as us Kiwis. They take pre-prepared food with all that packaging and stuff - because they’re probably not into the outdoors as much as we are…. And I don’t really think that they’d be the kind of people that you could say ‘don’t drop litter’

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\(^{100}\) A number of authors have discussed behavioural norms in wilderness settings (e.g. Heywood 1996, 2000; Lucas 1964; Shelby & Vaske 1991; Shelby, Vaske & Donnelly 1996; Stankey 1973). Havlick (2006) also noted that certain behaviours (such as cutting trees for camp fires or defecating in streams), although legally permitted in wilderness, are ‘widely shunned by back country visitors in the interest of respecting others’ desires’ (p. 58).
to, or ‘don’t go around and smash all the seedlings on the sides of the tracks. I guess they don’t have an appreciation for the level of damage they could be doing because they have a different mentality to us. And that's potentially because they haven’t been brought up in the bush or whatever (B 196).

Overseas visitors were also typically characterised as being less skilled and less able than New Zealand wilderness users, and were believed to require higher quality tracks and facilities to support them in their recreational pursuits. As noted in Chapter Eight, several study participants expressed concern about unprepared groups of international visitors that they had encountered during their wilderness trip in Fiordland. For example:

_I mean the Germans we met on the Hauroko Track just about killed themselves when it was raining - they couldn't cope with it. They just don't have the experience in those conditions (R 068)._}

Adding to these negative perceptions was the fact that New Zealanders have often had to ‘pick up the pieces’ of international visitors’ misadventures in wilderness and other remote areas. ‘N’ was one of several interviewees who told me about tramping trips where they had had to help foreigners who had fallen into difficulty because of a lack of knowledge, expertise, or sheer stupidity:

_When we did lake Waikarimoana, there was this group - mostly Americans - who turned up at our hut. It was about 8 at night, and pouring with rain, and they had no waterproof gear. They were absolutely soaked through. They had no food, because they’d split up with their party and the guys were carrying all the food. And the whole hut rallied around trying to find some dry clothes and dry sleeping bags and feeding them. And my sister is a doctor and she dressed the ankle and they didn't even say thank you! (N 202)._}

Reports in the popular media about overseas tourists having to be rescued from misadventures in the outdoors are also likely to have contributed to this negative stereotyping. Headlines such as ‘Rescued men swam along Dusky Track’; ‘Tourist hurt in 30m plunge’; ‘Australian tourist ignored swing bridge’ and ‘injured solo English hiker prompts warning’ (Newztextplus 2008) publicise the various mishaps and accidents of overseas visitors and, in doing so, may perpetuate the view that they are incompetent, inexperienced and a threat to wilderness values. The idea that international visitors lack experience in the wilderness is also supported by some New Zealand wilderness researchers and managers – as illustrated in the following quotation from a New Zealand wilderness publication:

_In most cases, overseas tourists do not have adequate local knowledge, equipment, experience, time, or backcountry skills in camping, route-finding, alpine travel, and river-crossing, to undertake such wilderness recreation opportunities unassisted._

_(Cessford & Dingwall 1997, p. 37)_
Again, such publicity is likely to have the effect of reinforcing negative stereotypes of overseas visitors.

9.3.2 Displacement

Another common belief amongst those interviewed was that international visitors are ‘pushing the kiwis out’ of certain areas and altering the recreation experience as they bring their own understandings of (and practices within) wilderness to New Zealand. Implicit in these discussions was the idea that ‘average Kiwi’ (which respondents overwhelmingly thought they represented) was being treated unfairly:

> So ordinary Kiwis are being pushed a bit further back... and it’s not that we resent the overseas people we’ve met on the tracks, but it’s just that we’ve noticed that Kiwis tend to move to other areas because of it (C 321).

Although participants thought this was predominantly occurring in the more popular areas of conservation land, they still believed that there could be significant implications for more remote areas of the Park:

> Well displacement hasn’t affected me in wilderness areas yet, because most of the places we go to, we know that there will be very few people there... But it has affected me in other places, and so I think that’s something we’ve got to be very careful of in the future. In any of these areas where tourism becomes important, you have to ensure that you don’t destroy the features that make it special (B 067).

This process was described in detail and with great sadness by ‘R’, using the example of Mount Aspiring National Park:

> I just feel that many of the special parts of New Zealand are shrinking because of increasing international visitor use. Basically, as the margins get squeezed, more and more people pop into the wilderness areas and thus the actual value of wilderness areas becomes eroded... A good example of where this is happening is in Mount Aspiring National Park, where the moderate to hard tramps on the periphery are becoming increasingly the preserve of the international tramer. It has become more of a tourist operation with jet boats up the valleys and lodges and things like that. And it’s creating problems with things like camp sites and toileting and crowding; and facility development invariably follows. And I suspect that that is the inevitable thing that will happen with the Dusky track. If the numbers of international trampers going there continues to rise and if the Dusky reacts as the other places I have seen have, then the New Zealand trampers will stop going there (R 140).

A number of interviewees gave examples of more popular areas of New Zealand conservation land from which they had been displaced, and argued that it was only a matter of time before the same thing happened in wilderness. These included Milford Sound and the Milford Track, several other Great Walks (the Routeburn and the Kepler), the Abel Tasman National Park,

101 Mount Aspiring National Park is another park in New Zealand’s South island which borders Fiordland National Park and is famous for its rugged alpine setting.
the Humpridge area and parts of the Nelson Lakes National Park. The following quotation typifies many of the comments made by New Zealanders regarding this issue:

*Oh there are lots of places I don’t go to because of the number of international tourists there. I wouldn’t go doing the Abel Tasman in the middle of summer, for example. And it's not just the Abel Tasman and Milford Sound that are becoming overcrowded with tourists. The Dusky has got its fair amount of Israelis and what not now...* (S 152)

‘C’ said that her and her partner always take a tent when they go away tramping now because of a fear that the place will be ‘over run’ with tourists:

*Oh I definitely think displacement is an issue. And we use the tent for that reason now. We've often arrived at a hut mid afternoon and by the evening the hut's full up, so we pack up our tent and go down the valley for half an hour, pitch our tent, and enjoy the quiet and peace rather than the noise and everything else* (C 321).

Some participants had also chosen to visit particular areas ‘out of season’ (for example after major school holidays, or after the summer season) in order to ‘avoid the crowds: ‘I definitely avoid certain places at certain times of year, or altogether because of increased use. Because the thought of staying in a hut with heaps of other people just doesn't appeal’ (D 007). This indicates that displacement is occurring for some of the most experienced New Zealand outdoor recreationists on a temporal (as well as a spatial) level. Whether these effects will actually spread into wilderness, though, remains to be seen.

### 9.3.3 International visitors are ‘taking over’

A common sentiment expressed by respondents was that the wilderness resource is one of New Zealand’s greatest assets and one for which they feel a deep sense of pride. Wilderness was seen as something unique to New Zealand and something which distinguished it from the rest of the world. Because of this, New Zealand participants were unhappy about the idea of international visitor use increasing to the point where it felt like ‘foreigners’ had ‘taken over’ the wilderness. As illustrated by ‘F’:

*Y’know, New Zealand is a beautiful country and you feel like you want to lock it up because it's yours. And I’d hate to think that it might get to the point where a New Zealander couldn't get access, or had to wait 6 months because there's so many foreigners doing those walks* (F 134).

It is important to note here that very few respondents had any *direct* experience or examples of international visitors ‘taking over’ the wilderness. Most of the negative encounters with international visitors that were discussed had occurred in high-use areas of conservation land and not in wilderness. The key point is that they feared that the same thing may *eventually* happen in wilderness if international tourism to New Zealand continues to increase.
‘F’ also expressed his frustration (and that of many other participants) at the fact that international visitors appeared to be ‘taking advantage of’ New Zealand’s conservation land, and not contributing enough to its up-keep:

I suppose you feel a kind of used... it's a bit of the old Kiwi outdoor thing - y'know, this is my country, and you're just a tourist, using us for a month to go and do your thing... And it kind of feels like they don't contribute enough to have free access to this area (F 134).

A number of respondents felt that New Zealand tax dollars were unfairly being used to effectively fund ‘cheap holidays’ and ‘rescue missions’ for overseas tourists, and this was clearly exacerbating any negative views they held about ‘foreigners’:

Yes, New Zealand is a pretty cheap holiday for those overseas people who buy the annual hut pass. I mean, compared to many overseas countries where you have to pay to get access to parks for a start and then pay by the day. And I think it's good that the national parks are still free, but you feel in a way that your own taxes have paid for that and are maintaining that...I just feel that sometimes the overseas people come in and they buy a hut pass and then they spend 12 weeks tramping and it's all free. Whereas the average Kiwi has 2-3 week's holiday a year - if we're lucky, and if you spend 2 of those tramping, then you're doing well! (C 321).

What came through very strongly in these discussions was the sense of injustice felt at the fact that international visitors were accorded the same rights of access as New Zealanders to public conservation land, despite the fact that they did not contribute directly to its up-keep. New Zealanders compared their country to other similar Western nations where visitors are expected to pay entry fees or ‘tourist taxes’ towards the management of National Parks and they argued that this should be the case in New Zealand:

We're too easy with the use of the conservation estate. I mean, you go overseas and you get charged a tourism fee or a conservation fee as soon as you arrive in the country; you go to a national park and you get charged a fee... and the Department of Conservation is trying to do its job with the few taxes that they get (R 068).

New Zealand was described as a ‘soft touch’ with regards to the way in which it manages access for visitors to conservation land. As ‘J’ explained angrily:

There is a real perception that overseas visitors are taking advantage of the natural resources the country has to offer. We're absolutely spewing about it - some of us anyway... [in an American accent] 'Look at this guys - this is bloody amazing - come to New Zealand, we can winch out as many trout as we like - great guys, lets get over there, it won't cost you a bean!' (J 995).

He and others expressed anger and frustration that the government appeared to be refusing to accept responsibility for the situation:

102 Unlike many countries in the Western world, access to conservation land (including all national parks and reserves) is free of charge and the management of these areas is funded primarily through taxpayer contributions.
...I mean, what's going on?! Are we stupid?? Are we blind?? Don’t the people who make the decisions travel overseas with their eyes open? and think 'oh, maybe we can do that in New Zealand and then the tourists can pay for some of the damage they cause’ (J 995).

Several interviewees suggested that a ‘tourist tax’ for overseas visitors may be appropriate to ensure that all users contributed sufficiently to the management of wilderness:

Who should have the right to access remote and wilderness areas? [long pause...] 3rd and 4th generation New Zealanders! [laughs...] ... I think that New Zealanders should continue to have free access. And for foreigners, well maybe there should be a fee that you can regulate the numbers with or something (S 152).

People who come from overseas to utilise our wilderness resource should be paying fees to maintain it, because they’ll ruin it otherwise... I'm pretty sure that a fair bit of my taxes go towards maintaining it... They pay taxes in their own country to go in the national parks, so why shouldn’t they do that here? (J 995).

A key point to note here is that, like many of the comments in the popular press regarding this issue (discussed in Chapters Two and Three), the New Zealanders in this study tended not to see themselves as ‘tourists’ when they spoke of their visits to wilderness. They saw themselves as ‘people of the land’ and because of this, some of them felt they should have priority over international visitors in regard to access. This view has been expressed in several articles in the popular press (some of which were discussed in Chapter Three), and in a recent publication entitled ‘New Zealand’s Wilderness Heritage’ which reads:

This position [that the needs of New Zealanders should take precedence over those of international visitors on the conservation estate] is not one of reactionary xenophobia; rather it is akin to what tangata whenua feel as ‘people of the land’; a special nurturing bond, born of a long association with New Zealand’s wilderness places and a deep knowledge of their character. Just as tangata whenua are accorded a privileged position as the first people of Aotearoa, so too should all New Zealand citizens expect that their recreational needs in the back country will take precedence over those of overseas tourists

(Molloy & Potton 2007, p. 316)

Several participants in this study suggested that access to wilderness areas should be restricted to New Zealanders – a further demonstration of the strong sense of ownership that they felt towards the wilderness resource, and an indication of the mounting tension between traditional users and ‘new’ users: ‘Well I know this sounds a bit selfish, but I’d like to see those areas set aside just for us and don't let people land every 5 minutes with 10 Asians taking photos!’ (F 134). But as ‘F’ went on to discuss, the issue is very complex, and there would be a significant number of challenges involved in attempting to implement such a strategy without detrimentally affecting the New Zealand tourism industry:
I've often thought about the debate over whether they [international tourists] should pay more... (pauses...) and I wonder if that is the answer - I mean, do they cause greater impact than the Kiwis? Is that a fair thing to do? Will that drive tourists away? I just don't know the answer to that to be honest. And there is this feeling that Kiwis own it, so they should have some privileged rights... and I'm a bit of an advocate for that. Now whether that's access to areas where only Kiwis can go... I don't know how you'd do that (F 134).

Despite widespread evidence of antipathy towards international tourists in wilderness, most respondents were reluctant to say anything which could have been perceived as xenophobic, overly opinionated or narrow-minded. Many frequently attempted to qualify their comments about overseas visitors, or to make them sound less offensive with light-hearted statements such as: ‘Well I've got nothing against people from overseas, but...(N 202)’; or ‘I don’t want to sound bigoted or whatever the word might be, but…’ (S 152). Others made friendly remarks about international visitors they had met in the past after making a negative comment. For example: ‘But on the plus side, it's quite nice to meet English people or Germans - they're great folks themselves I suppose’ (F 134);

I mean, at the individual level, I think that most people I've ever met from overseas in New Zealand's back country, have been perfectly nice, and I haven't had a problem. But... it's more about the way they use the back country (R 140).

And when I questioned participants about whether their reactions towards these visitors were because they happened to be from overseas, their responses were commonly along the lines of:

Oh I wouldn’t imagine it would be because they were from overseas that bothered me! I mean I’ve travelled heaps and I love meeting other people. No, it’s purely a) the numbers, and b) the fact that a lot of them are inexperienced and have no idea what they’re doing really! [laughs....] and they don’t really kind of understand quite how wild and unpredictable some areas can be [laughs again...] ...(N 202).

The same sentiments were expressed in a recent article in the Federated Mountain Clubs Bulletin which read:

Don’t get me wrong. It is fantastic that overseas visitors enjoy our mountains. In no way do I want to restrict them, and I’m as likely to head into the hills with an overseas friend as with a local. But shouldn’t there be an underlying policy that recognises and protects the prior rights of locals?

(Spearpoint 2007, p. 34)

These reactions serve to illustrate that this is indeed a controversial issue, and one which perhaps many New Zealanders are uncomfortable about expressing their views on. It could be that these strong feelings about international tourism (perhaps fuelled by negative media
representations of ‘foreigners’) are one way in which existing users are striving to protect traditional New Zealand wilderness meanings and values.

9.4 Commercialisation and commodification of wilderness

Commercialisation was regarded as a major threat to New Zealand wilderness. Respondents felt that the nature of wilderness as they knew it would be changed forever if commercialism was allowed to occur on any great scale: ‘commercialisation would destroy what is special about these areas’ (B 067). The use of wilderness for commercial tourism activities was regarded as a potential catalyst for this. As explained by ‘M’:

Allowing commercial operators in would just be opening the floodgates - somebody will say 'well if he's allowed to do that in there, then I'm going to do this and if they're allowed to do that, then we should be able to do this...' And you can't stop them because if the first guy's in there, then why shouldn't the others be allowed in? And they'll do something slightly different - they'll put a lodge on top of this mountain, and just fly into the lodge... And DOC will be forced to put bridges in and things like that if they allow tourists to go to certain areas because one of the tourists will trip over and do his ankle; and one of them will get stuck in the mud for a couple of hours, so they'll have to put a boardwalk in there. And that will happen - if it's opened to commercial operators. You can't just say to the tourist 'We'll take your money and we'll fly you there, but if you hurt yourself, bad luck!' They just won't accept that. And so I think that anything commercial that is started down there will just be a foot in the door and the start of the end of the wilderness (M 244).

Respondents had observed this process of commercialisation in other parts of New Zealand such as Milford Sound, the Abel Tasman National Park, Mount Aspiring National Park, Mount Cook, Marchau and Queenstown and this was why they believed it posed a real threat to wilderness in the future:

And there are definitely other areas where this process of incremental commercial development has occurred. Mount Aspiring has already gone through this stage, and I think that unfortunately Mt. Cook has as well (R 140).

Well commercial tourism certainly has spread into more remote areas overseas hasn't it? So why wouldn't that happen here? You look at some of our other national parks around the country. Just look what's happened to Nelson and the Abel Tasman (R 195).

Many felt that the drive to develop commercial activities in wilderness would be difficult to stop (once it had begun) because of the financial gains to be made from it:

Well I think the commercialisation of remote and wilderness areas is a huge threat, because the dollar will be really squeaking in some people's ears... We’re going to see more and more commercial pressure on our outdoors... and I don’t know if you can actually stop it, because of the strength of the financial interests behind it... (J 995).
This strength of feeling against the commercialisation of wilderness appeared to be grounded in a belief that anything commercial would violate the romantic philosophies of wilderness as a reaction to modern society (discussed in Chapter Two). As ‘P’ explained:

Yeah, this anti-commercialism thing, it's a difficult one really. It's rooted deep in our culture... I mean it goes back as far as the year zero when Jesus shoed people out of the church for selling thing, and turning it into a commercial place. It's a deep-seated ethical thing which states that money is bad, and that commercialism goes against the core of wilderness values (P 055).

While the impact of commercialisation on individual experiences was clearly a concern for respondents, discussions about the topic also reflected a much greater fear that New Zealand’s wilderness, and the cultural values that it embodies, would be ‘sold off’ to commercial interests:

I think that too often we have something, and the first thing we try and do is sell it overseas and I don't think we should be doing that - I think we should be looking after it. We've done it with Milford Sound - we've sold that; we've sold Queenstown... [pauses...] I don't think we should be doing that all the time. And it could all happen so quickly – it could all be sold-off, and then it's just too late - it's gone, and there's nothing left. It's all gone. You put a dollar value on it and there's guaranteed to be someone out there who's got the money to pay for it and then it's gone, but I don’t see how you can put a value on something like this... you just can’t... (M 244).

New Zealand’s public lands (and in particular wilderness) were regarded as a national treasure and a cultural icon that should be protected for future generations. As will become evident in Chapter Ten, wilderness was believed to embody many of the core values associated with New Zealand identity. To ‘lose’ wilderness to overseas interests may therefore be like losing part of New Zealand culture. The following quotation illustrates the deep sadness felt by many of those interviewed at the thought of wilderness becoming commercialised. Along with several other individuals involved in this research, this particular respondent thought that commercialisation of the wilderness was only a matter of time. When I asked him how this thought made him feel, he replied:

The implications of commercial development of remote and wilderness areas? [pauses and sighs deeply]... Just something more that we've lost - another thing we've lost... [pauses again, sighs, and looks wistfully out of the window]... (J 194).

9.4.1 Commercial tourism

Both New Zealanders and international respondents felt that tourism was the most significant commercial threat to wilderness in New Zealand. There was a general feeling that the values and practices which underpin tourism are very different to those that wilderness embodies. Many respondents believed that tourism should therefore be confined to particular (i.e. non-
wilderness) areas. This view is exemplified in the following quotation from a well-known New Zealand outdoor recreation publication:

We must not give a loose rein to entrepreneurs who would open up every last bit of back country to encourage the tourist dollar. Apart from the several high-altitude roads which pass through alpine areas, and existing charter flight and jet boat use, access to the mountains and wild parts of New Zealand should be for those who dare! (Devlin & Booth 1998, p. 123)

References to tourism in the research diaries indicated that respondents did not expect to (or did not want to) encounter tourism or ‘tourists’. For example: ‘It will be good not to come across civilization and tourists!’ (Diary 226); ‘I expect to meet few Japanese tour groups!’ (Diary 40); ‘I hope to see no other people, especially no chopper and speedboat trampers (Diary 418); ‘A wilderness experience should have no tourists accompanied by guides and commercial trappings’ (Diary 995); ‘I hope DOC doesn't bow to the pressure of tourist numbers and try to upgrade the paths, but I bet it is only time’ (Diary 226); ‘Keep Fiordland as it is. Don't put anything in there. If the tourist can't handle it tell them not to go there’ (Diary 244). Although no-one reported encountering any form of commercial tourism activities during their visit, some reported seeing such activities in the distance and either said that it annoyed them, it disturbed them, or they were glad to be away from it: ‘The sense of wilderness was shattered by the cruise boat going to the glow worm caves and the buildings, waves, lights and people near the caves’ (Diary 041). One respondent wrote that the commercialism he had seen and heard on the Milford Road during his climbing trip had destroyed his sense of wilderness: ‘Fiordland did not feel like a wilderness to me – there were too many buses and tourists on [the Milford] road nearby. Commercialism was disgusting’ (Diary 206).

Commercial tourism was one of several key topics of discussion in the interviews, but I deliberately left it up to respondents to define the concept for themselves. When asked ‘how would you define commercial tourism?’ most people emphasised the distinction between independent and commercial use in their definition. The key characteristics of a commercial tourism experience were described as:

1. A client paying a fee in return for a service on conservation land
2. An operator extracting commercial gain from the conservation estate (and paying a fee to DOC)
3. A guide or operator taking responsibility for the welfare and safety of the group
4. Often associated with motorised transport, big groups, short trips, less experienced visitors, ‘foreigners’ and ‘tourists’.

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Commercial tourism was typically described as an inappropriate use of wilderness. Wilderness was regarded as a place where one could escape from many of the ‘trappings of modern society’ – including commercial activity and that which is associated with it: ‘There's nothing commercial about wilderness at all - it's so refreshing. There's nobody at a gate taking a dollar off you; there's nobody selling T-shirts and I love it because of that’ (M 244). The absence of commercial activity was seen as one of the key things that makes wilderness special and unique and participants felt that the introduction of commercial tourism operations would be likely to have a major impact on these values. As ‘F’ explained:

> Oh well if a commercial operator set up in one of the wilderness areas where I go hunting, it would change the whole experience - that would be contrary to the idea of wilderness… If you've got a whole lot of people in there then it just wouldn't be the same. People go to Fiordland because it's not like that. Fiordland is something special - it's something different and so I think the introduction of tour companies to these areas would definitely have a negative impact (F 134).

Some respondents felt extremely strongly that there should be absolutely no commercial tourism use of New Zealand wilderness: ‘No. No. No… No forms of commercial tourism would be compatible with wilderness - none at all’ (R 140):

> No. I don’t think any form of commercial tourism would be compatible with wilderness, because I think the very act of introducing commercial tourism changes the experience for everybody else and it's no longer a wilderness experience (N 202).

The key reason for this was because they believed that it would undermine the traditional values they associated with the experience: ‘And once commercial tourists start coming in, then the whole experience changes for everybody - you just have to go there to see the scenery like they do’ (J 061):

> Well commercial tourism would devalue the experience for me. To me, one of the big things about the wilderness area is that it's you doing it - it's not somebody else taking that responsibility, and I think that we need to keep places in NZ that are reserved for that sort of activity... to see an activity where tourist groups were led over these areas would totally devalue the trips we do. I think the lack of people and tourism is what makes them so special (B 067).

These thoughts reflect some of the core elements of the New Zealand Wilderness Policy and are consistent with the reasons behind the NZCA decision to allow no more commercial tourism in wilderness areas (as discussed in Chapter Five). Commercial tourism was seen as something which did not belong in wilderness. It was disliked, mistrusted, and it was feared for the potentially destabilising impacts it could have on wilderness values. Some respondents felt so strongly about this that they said they would not visit wilderness again if commercial
tourism were to become established there: ‘well if they started taking tourists in there, I
wouldn’t go there again. It just wouldn’t be the same’ (J 995).

Specific ways in which participants thought tourism could affect wilderness values included:
increasing the chances of encounters with others, introducing bigger groups into the area,
increasing the evidence of humans and using motorised transport. All of these effects were
seen as contrary to the ideals New Zealand wilderness. As explained by ‘S’:

*Well at the end of the day, you're less likely to be able to experience that solitude if
there's a commercial tourism operation going on in the wilderness area. It reduces the
opportunities you have to be alone; it diminishes the challenge of it all. And I just
have no interest in an experience like that because everyone else is doing it. I mean, if
there were suddenly heaps of people using these wilderness areas then it wouldn't be a
wilderness experience anymore* (S 152).

In contrast to independent use of wilderness (which, as explained in Chapter Eight,
respondents believe has personal growth and development as a key objective) tourism
activities were believed to be motivated primarily by a drive for profit. This, respondents
argued, would lead commercial operators to continuously ‘push the boundaries’ which would
degrade wilderness by introducing inappropriate activities into the area:

*Well the operators are there to make money... that's what they're there for, and that's
their driving force - they wouldn't do it for free. And they say it's about experiences,
but I mean, at the end of the day, they're pushing for the 'experience', to get more
people in the area so they can make more money. So that's really what it comes down
to. Do they really care about the future of Fiordland? I think it's just about profit - the
more people they can get there, the more profit they make* (R 195).

The idea of private individuals making money out of a public resource was also objectionable
to some respondents. They felt that the philosophy behind protecting conservation land is to
acknowledge that the land has worth beyond its economic value, and so to generate a profit
from it would go against these ideals. ‘R’ explained:

*Ideally, for me, there'd be no commercial tourism in national parks altogether – and
certainly not in wilderness! And my simplistic argument is that the land has been set
aside by a previous government who took the policy decision that we're not going to
extract an economic return from this land. They decided that it's got intrinsic values
which outweigh the potential economic benefit, and that's why it was set aside rather
than being logged, or having a hydro station built, or having a coal mine dug
underneath it. And to me, to then put tourism into that is extracting economic returns
from the land. It's creating private goods on what should be a public good. And I'm
just not comfortable with that concept* (R 140).
Commercial trips are different

Central to understanding this antipathy towards tourism in wilderness was the belief that a commercial wilderness experience is very different from an independent wilderness experience, and that its presence would degrade the quality of that independent experience. ‘R’ compared his wilderness trip in Fiordland with some of the commercial trips he had encountered in the past:

And some of those guided ‘wilderness trips’ are just nothing like what we do - like those people who are dropped off to go fishing with a champagne lunch by the river, and then they’re flown back to their lodge in town and the chef whips them up a five course dinner and they make up tall stories about how great they were. Whereas we carry everything on our back; we live rough, we don’t eat five course meals, and to me, that’s what the wilderness is about (R 230).

Commercial tourists were also believed to be very different to independent wilderness visitors, and this was evidenced in the pejorative way they were often described. For example:

There's bound to be a difference between commercial and independent visitors. People who need the assurance of their safety and that kind of thing while they're out there are probably less experienced.... And from past encounters, I just feel that they are weak! [laughs!] - that's rather an unkind way of putting it. But I mean, god, those trips they do, they’re nothing like what we do! (R 068).

They [commercial tourists] are just not the same kind of people. You feel that yes, it might be nice to meet them and talk to them on the streets of Auckland, but they don't really belong up here (J 061).

Well commercial tourists are not necessarily outdoorsie people...[pauses...] ... and they might not be like-minded people. I mean, you've generally got something in common with independent trampers, so you can have interesting chats, and have fun at the hut with them. Whereas the guided walkers are often different (N 202).

Commercial tourists were typically characterised as being older, well-educated, less experienced and from overseas: ‘I suspect that the majority of the customers for guided hunting are foreign (of course) (F 134). The perceived differences also extended to motives for participation. Rather than seeking a challenging adventure which requires commitment, determination, passion and a desire to be ‘immersed in the experience’; commercial clients were often characterised as seeking an easy experience – a quick way to ‘plunge’ into a wilderness areas and get back out again just as quickly, so they can ‘say they have been there and done that’: ‘because the sort of person who wants a guided experience often doesn’t want anything too hard’ (C 321):

Well I think that commercial tourists would be after a totally different experience... I mean I'm really conscious that I don't want to be seen as a snob - like 'oh, they're not having a 'real' experience, but I think there is a real difference in their experiences (D 007).
Well commercial tourists are not there to have the same experience. They're probably there to see the scenery more than they are to have this experience with nature - well that's certainly the feeling I get. They're always taking pictures of everything, and they're always asking me to take pictures of them in front of the mountains and the glaciers! (J 061).

Another aspect of difference was the way in which tourists were believed to approach wilderness. In contrast to the independent approach (which requires dedication, time and a great deal of mental and physical exertion), commercial tourists were believed to be seeking an ‘easy’ experience whereby they could ‘cheat’ their way to wilderness without ever really attempting to understand what it is really about. ‘F’ was one of several who felt this way:

I really don't think those people [tourists] have the same appreciation of wilderness as an independent person who goes into that area and spends 2 weeks... I mean they come up here on a bus and hop into a helicopter and hop off on top of a mountain and take a photo and hop back in and go back to the bus - that's not what it's about! In my mind, commercial tourists haven't put in the effort to warrant the experience (F 134).

And I just don’t get the feeling that commercial tourists put in the same amount of effort as us. For a wilderness trip, you should make the effort yourself - if you're not fit enough, then maybe get fitter. If you lack the skills, then you should go and learn them somewhere’. You shouldn’t just use your money as a substitute for effort (R 230).

Commercial tourists were thus regarded as different, as inferior; as morally deficient and lacking virtue, because they were paying someone else to ‘do the work for them’. Respondents expressed their frustration that an experience was being offered in exchange for money when, in their opinion, it should only be available for people who are prepared to put in the physical and emotional effort:

The issue I have is that, in that case, your money buys you the experience - not your skills or fitness or experience - which is how it should be.... I don't like the idea of money buying people access to the outdoors when it's not available to the average Kiwi. And I suppose life is a bit like that - certainly a lot of overseas areas have been ruined by money (R 230).

They revealed disappointment, anger and frustration that commercial clients were able to access highly remote areas without putting in the required effort, and didn’t believe that they would have the same appreciation of the experience:

If people really want to have a wilderness experience, they can do it themselves. They've just got to make the effort. I don't think people need to be led by the hand - if they do, then they shouldn't be in there. They wouldn't appreciate the rain, they wouldn’t appreciate the challenges; they don't appreciate the experience for what it is I suppose... I don't believe you can go in there for a day and get out of it what you should get out of it. You've got to spend some time and have the bad days with the good days - then you'll appreciate what we've got down there (M 244).
That some people are not making the required level of effort or engaging with wilderness was clearly very frustrating for independent wilderness users, who do not feel that the experience can be in any way comparable:

*Yea, I think that commercial tourists have different motivations. They've heard about NZ and they say 'oh well I'll go over there and pay this guy a couple of grand; I'll get 3 days in the bush; I'll be able to get my photo to take home and show people... It's all about just getting something, and that's not really what it's about. I mean you tell them to come with me for 2 weeks in Fiordland and walk all day every day, carrying all this gear, and get soaking wet and battered and bruised, well they won't do it (F 134).*

They felt that commercial clients would never be able to develop the same appreciation of the wilderness environment or the experience because they do not ‘get involved’ or become ‘immersed’ in their surroundings. As noted in Chapter Eight, this was seen as a necessary practice in traditional New Zealand wilderness:

*I think some of the people on the commercial trips don't actually want to interact with the environment - you know, scramble up a bank or get muddy or anything like that... They'd be there with their video cameras to shoot as much as they can in the time that they have available before they rush on to their next stop... They're sort of observing it rather than partaking in it... And that's the difference between us and 'tourists' - we're actually partaking in the environment and what's around us, and co-existing with it; as opposed to sitting in a flash motorboat that's got a coffee shop and everything else in it... Yes, I think for them to really experience wilderness, they need to actually be partaking in wilderness, rather than looking at it through the lens of a camera (C 321).*

There was a widely-held fear that commercial trips such as this may one day come to dominate recreational use of the wilderness resource, and would fundamentally alter the existing recreational opportunities. ‘D’ had seen major changes in the nature of the recreational experience in the Abel Tasman National Park in previous years, as a result of increasing commercial use, and was afraid that this might happen in wilderness if left unchecked:

*Well because of the commercial opportunities available, people’s trips are getting shorter and shorter – they don't go there for five days now; they go for one. I've had some really nice five day sea-kayaking trips up there in the past, but now it's all day-trips - water taxi up, do the experience in a day or less, get out of there, tick it off, and move onto somewhere else. Yea, it's really changed things (D 007).*

Even several of the tour operators I spoke to agreed that tourism has the potential to detrimentally affect traditional wilderness values in New Zealand. The following operator had been working in, what he believed to be, a socially and environmentally sustainable manner

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103 The Abel Tasman National Park is another park situated in the north west of New Zealand’s South island. It is renowned for its golden sandy beaches, beautiful coastline and opportunities for water-based activities.
for a number of years, but still felt that the company’s presence was having an impact on wilderness:

*Oh yes, I totally believe that commercial tourism can have detrimental impacts on wilderness values. If I said it didn't then I'd be lying. Because it doesn't matter how small you try and make yourself, you're always having some kind of impact* (TO5).

### Access fees

Another perceived negative consequence of increased tourism in wilderness was that traditional users of the resource (i.e. New Zealanders) may eventually have to pay to fees simply to access these areas. Despite the fact that many New Zealanders thought that *overseas* visitors should pay entry fees, the idea that *they* might have to pay was intolerable because it would contrast so strongly with the Kiwi tradition of free access to public lands. This was regarded as an important and very valuable part of New Zealand cultural identity, and something which distinguished New Zealand from many other Western countries with similar national park systems. As noted earlier in the thesis, current legislation governing the use of public conservation land is founded on the New Zealand egalitarian principles of free access. Section 3 (17) of the Conservation Act (1987) states that “the entry to and use of conservation areas by the public shall be free of charge” and the National Parks Act (1980) states that parks are to be “maintained in natural state and public to have free right of entry” [emphasis added] (Statutes of New Zealand, 2005). The strength of feeling about maintaining these rights was evidenced by the way in which New Zealanders discussed the topic:

*I'd hate it to get like America where you've got to pay $1000 to go into the public estate and go hunting. And I know there's a number of private lodges in NZ like that, but please don't do it in the DOC areas... Because before long, they'd be charging to enter the DOC estate and I just think oh god, y'know, lets not go there - It's like that in England isn't it? You have to pay to fish in a river over there? Oh man... that would be really sad if it got like that here* (F 134).

Most respondents did, however, feel that existing conservation legislation in New Zealand was strong enough to prevent this scenario from happening anytime in the near future: ‘Thankfully, wilderness areas being DOC land, they can't exclusively tie the land up and deny the average Kiwi from going there’ (R 230). Again this illustrates the sense of ownership that many respondents felt towards the wilderness resource and the fact that they saw themselves as ‘normal’ New Zealanders, with a birth right to access public conservation land where and whenever they wanted.
9.5 The use of technology in wilderness

The whole concept of wilderness has changed in the last 10 years with the introduction of new technology. There's GPS's, satellite phones, personal locator beacons, tents that can withstand the conditions, fibreglass kayaks, gortex clothing and better equipment... So there's been a whole change in the way people recreate and it just makes a mockery of wilderness (P 055).

Advancements in technology have undoubtedly made wilderness experiences more accessible (and arguably safer), but for many participants, this was viewed in a negative light: ‘Technology has definitely attracted more people to wilderness and it's made it more comfortable, but I think that, at the end of the day, that's not really what it's all about’ (D 007). Technological developments were believed to shelter people from the core elements of wilderness, such as challenge, danger, risk and discomfort and were therefore seen as having the potential to undermine the wilderness concept.

Improvements in transport were viewed as the key technological threat to wilderness and the effects of this are described in section 9.5.1. Changes resulting from improved equipment (such as waterproof clothing, backpacks, hiking boots, tents and sleeping mats) were also discussed. Such developments have meant that people can travel lighter - and therefore further in wilderness and in much more comfort than before, but were often regarded as a gradual erosion of wilderness values. The best and most ‘authentic’ wilderness experiences were typically described as those which used the bare minimum of equipment and most closely resembled the wilderness explorations of the early pioneers. As explained by ‘D’:

I think that sometimes we can get a bit caught up in all the consumerism that surrounds outdoor equipment. Macpac want you to believe that this year's fleece is the best, so that you buy one to replace last year's one... [pauses]... The most memorable wilderness experiences I've had have just been ones where it's really simple - where you've got a pack, or a kayak full of gear, and you just go, and you haven't got lots of extra clutterey stuff and logistics to organise... And so I do think that all the gear is good, but it can over-clutter the experience as well (D 007).

This illustrates that some wilderness users may be resisting the influences of new technologies because of a deep-seated fear of change and in an attempt to recall, or maintain, traditional wilderness values from the early pioneering days.

Another major influence on wilderness has been in the field of communication technology and navigation equipment. Again, despite the obvious benefits of such equipment (such as easier navigation and improved chances of rescue in case of accidents), these new

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104 Macpac is a well known brand of outdoor clothing and equipment.
technologies were also believed to have the potential to detract from traditional wilderness values (such as remoteness and isolation) by providing a constant link with the outside world; effectively ‘shrinking’ the existing wilderness and the need to navigate in many areas:

And communication technology is just changing the whole experience - rescue is now so precise and so clean and so quick. If things went wrong ten years ago, it might have been 2 or 3 days - maybe even longer - before people started to get worried about you. And it just means that people are being hoiked out of the place when things go wrong. Once upon a time you had to commit yourself. You weren't going home until you were finished or you crawled out, or your mates crawled out and came back with the rest of the party and hauled you out.... So it just makes the whole thing much easier (P 055).

There is an inherent contradiction (also evident in the use of aircraft – to be discussed in the following section) in that most of those interviewed also admitted that they appreciated (and often made use of) particular types of new and improved technology. This reflects the underlying conflict in the minds of some wilderness users between wanting to preserve the traditional wilderness experience, but at the same time, being open to new technology if it suits their needs. Despite this, there was evidence that some individuals are resisting the use and influence of new communication technologies in wilderness. Several respondents had (or were aware of people who had) made conscious decisions not to take communication or navigation equipment into wilderness, precisely because they did not want to feel like they were ‘cheating’ or ‘doing it the easy way’:

I know people that go into the wilderness and don't take radios for the very deliberate reason that they don't want to be rescued. Well they want to live or die by their decisions - and that includes kayakers, trampers... And that does really start to nail home the true wilderness experience for me (P 055).

And probably one reason we don't take our radio with us is because we don't want to hear what the weather's going to do. If it's raining, it's raining. If it's sunny, it's sunny, and that's fine. We'll just do what we have to do based on what the weather's doing (M 244).

This again reflects a strong desire to uphold and protect the traditional wilderness values of challenge, danger and self-reliance (described in Chapter Eight) and is another example of how wilderness users, through their practices and activities, are reinforcing traditional wilderness meanings. Refusing to adopt new technologies is a means of resisting changes to the dominant construct of wilderness and demonstrating a personal commitment to the ‘purist’ wilderness ideal.

9.5.1 Improved access

Arguably the main factor which has thus far ensured the protection of the New Zealand wilderness is its remoteness and inaccessibility. Traditionally (and precisely because of their
inaccessibility), wilderness areas have been the domain of physically able, highly experienced recreationists who have sufficient time available to make such a trip. However, advances in transportation the past fifty years have meant that many areas which were previously inaccessible have become accessible to almost anyone, provided they have the funds to pay. Despite strict regulations in the Fiordland National Park Management Plan regarding access to remote and wilderness areas, many respondents felt that improved access was a major threat to wilderness.

Well there are just so many more options nowadays - more helicopters, more planes, more boats; it's just made it all much more accessible. Now you can jet boat up rivers or fly in and be dropped off, whereas 20 years ago you would have had to walk in there (F 134).

Many of the impacts discussed in section 9.2 were seen as likely outcomes of improved access to wilderness. (For example, the erosion of particular values such as remoteness, solitude, isolation, challenge and a sense of freedom). Improved access was associated with shorter trips, more noise, different types of visitors and general unwanted intrusions in wilderness. ‘P’ described the way in which Milford Sound had changed since the 1970s because of improved access$^{105}$:

And because of improved access, things are shifting from overnight trips to day trips – like Queenstown to Milford. In the 70s, it was a day trip from Te Anau to Milford and back. Now it’s a day trip from Queenstown to Milford and back. The boats are faster, they’re going quicker and they can carry more people. The wharves are bigger – the number of wharves have increased, the roads have been improved – it’s just all much quicker nowadays (P 055).

Improved access to wilderness can also reduce the need for skills and experience and can devalue the traditional wilderness ideal of having to put in immense effort and commitment in order to achieve it. ‘J’ described how he thought improved access could change deep-rooted and highly valued aspects of the wilderness experience:

And looking to the future, I see wilderness experiences coming under increasing pressure from improved access - people who want to do it the easy way, and not put in the effort, not learning all the skills they need to have that full experience. They want an instant experience. I mean the reason me and my mates can go to Fiordland now is because as teenagers, we built up the skills you need to go in there. We learnt through experiences and developed our skills - that’s that's how you build up to doing those kind of trips. Whereas to take somebody in a helicopter - [looking at his watch] ’right, you've got 6 hours to have a wilderness experience, and I'll pick you up on that flat up there... away you go, and don't forget your bag of lollies!’... and 6 hours later: 'did you enjoy your wilderness experience?'... 'yep, right, that'll be $100. Thank you very much!' No... no - that's not what it's about for me. And the people who want to have

$^{105}$ Although not wilderness, this example is illustrative of the kinds of effects that improved access can have on an area.
that kind of wilderness experience in 5 minutes, then they've missed 99% of what it's all about... (J 995).

Although new forms of access have been very advantageous to many people wanting to visit conservation land, there appears to be a rising tide of dissatisfaction with it in some areas (in particular, wilderness). Several recent proposals to improve access to valued areas of conservation land have met with strong opposition from individuals and recreational lobby groups. An example is the fierce public reaction to a proposal to construct a bridge over the Waiau River in Manapouri, Fiordland, which would have provided foot access to a remote-zoned (and relatively inaccessible) area of the national park. ‘K’ had objected to the proposal through written submissions to the Department of Conservation and he explained the situation to me:

_A bridge was proposed in the park plan (I presume by commercial interests), and that would have resulted in a flood of people into the northern part of that area, and would have completely changed the experience there. So I (and a number of others) strongly opposed that bridge and the Department took notice of the opposition and decided not to allow it to go ahead - which is a reflection of how many people said 'this is going to destroy the kind of experience that we've got there' _ (K 323).

Other respondents expressed anger at suggestions that access to wilderness might be made easier in the future: ‘Well if DOC was to suggest improving access to these areas, I'd oppose it tooth and nail! I'd be down to the minister's office so quick! And I'd be hammering on our local DOC door!’ (J 995).

Interestingly, a small number of respondents expressed a seemingly contradictory concern that any restriction of access could have a detrimental impact on wilderness: ‘Well for me, the biggest threat to New Zealand wilderness is that we could lose access - so you can’t get at the wilderness to enjoy it’ (F 134). People who felt this way were worried that the drive to ‘protect’ wilderness from human interference may actually prevent people from being able to experience it. Further discussions revealed that these respondents were again striving to protect the status quo – wilderness as they knew it. They did not want to see increasing levels of motorised access to wilderness (because of the impact it would have on their experience), but neither did they want their existing opportunities to access wilderness constrained by new regulations. This is another example of the ‘last settler syndrome’ (Nielsen et al. 1977). Again, it illustrates how any potential change to the status quo may be perceived as a threat because it would be likely to undermine traditional wilderness meanings.

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106 There are undoubtedly a large number of people who would be very happy about any improvements in access to wilderness and a number of those interviewed extolled the virtues of motorised transport to remote areas of the conservation estate. However, the focus of this part of my thesis is on threats to wilderness and therefore these views will not be discussed here.
9.5.2 Aircraft

If people want to go in there, they should walk in. One of the best things about wilderness is that there are no landing sites in there. That’s saved those areas and made them what they are today (J 194).

The issue of aircraft access to remote and wilderness areas was one of the biggest ‘sticking points’ in the Fiordland National Park planning process (Interview: Marie Long, Department of Conservation) and was an extremely popular topic of debate in the interviews. It therefore warrants separate discussion here. Aircraft were viewed as one of the biggest current threats to wilderness, insofar as they enable more (and potentially inexperienced) people to physically access the resource and to therefore potentially alter the way in which it is used and understood. As explained earlier, not everyone in this study was opposed to aircraft access and a small number of respondents talked of the advantages of having aircraft access to remote areas in Fiordland107. However, given that a considerable majority of the comments (in both the diaries and the interviews) were against aircraft (and other forms of motorised transport) in wilderness, it is these ideas that I will focus on in this section.

Participants objected to aircraft because of the direct impact that it could have on their experience in wilderness, and also because of the potential it has to undermine the concept of wilderness and the values that it embodies: ‘Well aircraft penetrate into your own perception of what the wilderness should be… it undermines your personal conception of wilderness’ (R 068). They described a variety of ways in which aircraft could detrimentally affect wilderness values, including ‘taking that feeling of isolation away’ and ‘jolting you out of the complete wilderness experience’; ‘A helicopter flew directly overhead, which really spoiled my mood and sense of isolation’ (Diary 323); ‘disturbing the peace and tranquillity’; detracting from the naturalness: ‘It’s a real irritation on the experience - it’s a distraction, it’s an irritation, and it feels incongruous with the environment’ (R 230); and providing a reminder of the civilisation that wilderness users are trying to escape from:

Well aircraft disturb the tranquillity of where you are, and that's one of the reasons why you go into wilderness - to get away from that - y'know the noise and rush of modern life. Because immediately when I hear a plane, it takes me back to the reality of life. And that's not what I go into the wilderness for (B 067).

Aircraft were also believed to encourage increased use of wilderness, which can lead to more social and biophysical impacts (crowding, conflict, vegetation damage and littering):

107 Benefits of aircraft identified by respondents included allowing people to access remote areas safely and efficiently, enabling people who have limited time available to access wilderness, allowing people (predominantly hunters) to carry more equipment and providing a valuable search and rescue service.
As soon as helicopter access is allowed in some remote area where it normally takes you a day and a half to walk to, then people will start bringing all sorts of gear with them; there'll be a big pile of beer cans and stuff will start getting damaged – so no. Helicopters in wilderness areas; NO! (M 244).

Aircraft can enable less experienced people to access potentially risky and dangerous remote areas. This may lead to changes in the predominant type of visitor to those places, with obvious implications for wilderness values.

The idea that aircraft enable people to be ‘dropped’ into wilderness without having to make the effort to get there themselves was also a source of frustration because, like commercial tourism, this negates the wilderness values of self-reliance and challenge. ‘D’ explained how air access can have a direct negative impact on the experience of independent wilderness users:

Now you can helicopter access into all of these remote mountain streams and go fishing for the day. You might have spent 2 or 3 days walking in there and the next minute a helicopter lands and some guy jumps out and that morning he was having breakfast in the hotel. It just seems wrong to me. I mean, you've worked really hard to get there and then they just cruise in by aircraft (D 007).

Again, this highlights the strong sense of entitlement and exclusiveness that wilderness users have for the experience, and supports the notion (described in Chapter Eight) that wilderness in New Zealand is something you should have to earn. Several respondents questioned why motorised access to wilderness was necessary when there are so many other less remote areas in New Zealand where a similar experience could easily be provided, but with much less impact on the people on wilderness values:

We have so many other areas where aircraft access is possible without these remote and wilderness areas being used like that - I mean you can drive down the Milford Road and take photos of the country and they'll look just the same as the photos that they would take up in the w wilderness areas, so why do they need to go there (R 195).

Like commercial tourism, allowing aircraft access was seen as the ‘thin end of the wedge’, or the ‘beginning of the end’ of a wilderness area. In other words, participants believed that if managers allowed even one or two aircraft landings in wilderness, then it would set a precedent for increased use in the future. As explained by ‘R’:

I mean, this year they might drop the odd one or two people in and the next year it's tourists, and the next year it's who knows what. So they set the precedent for other activities - to open up the area to other activities and uses (R 195).

There were, however, some levels on which aircraft were regarded as more acceptable in wilderness – for example when they flew at high altitude, when they passed quickly through
the area, or when they were relatively infrequent: ‘We saw a helicopter and two planes today but only for a couple of minutes – not an issue’ (Diary 194). Certain types of flight were also more acceptable because of the activity that they were involved in, or the places that they were going to. For example search and rescue (SAR) operations or conservation management flights such as pest control or hut and track maintenance were generally okay, as long as they happened infrequently and only when really necessary:

And this will sound really strange, but if I see a helicopter flying over and it's got a deer dangling below it that someone’s captured, I don't feel as bad about that helicopter flying over me - because at least there's an ecological benefit associated with it - it's doing something for conservation (K 323).

Aircraft were also evaluated in a more positive way if the people using the aircraft were believed to be akin. For example, some hunters did not mind other hunters accessing remote areas by aircraft, and trampers who had used aircraft to access the Park were much less likely to be bothered by aircraft: ‘Seeing constant tourist flights would bother me a lot, but to see a chopper fly by that's delivering other hunters doesn't bother me as much’ (F 134).

Travelling ‘under one’s own steam’ was overwhelmingly seen as the ‘right’ way to experience wilderness because it supports the wilderness ideals of self-reliance and challenge. Anything that was seen to deviate from this ‘norm’ (e.g. aircraft) tended to be regarded as morally wrong and incompatible with New Zealand wilderness. However, as mentioned in Chapter Seven, 60 out of the 67 participants had actually used motorised transport of one form or another to start or finish their wilderness trip. Most of those interviewed were aware of the irony of this. When I questioned them about it, their responses (illustrated in the following quotations) demonstrated a conflict between wanting to access their remote location quickly and efficiently, whilst also not wanting to encounter any signs of motorised transport during their trip:

Well yeah, I guess it does seem like a bit of a contradiction that I want aircraft access for hunting, but don’t want other people to have access! Yea, yea. I know. I agree, and that's a good point. I guess it's more about the reason for wanting that access that’s the issue (F 134).

Oh well I’m not an absolute with regards to motorised access – I mean, I’ll take a boat to the start of some trips, so I guess it’s good in that respect… I think the effect of aircraft entirely depends on where it occurs… I mean it's alright if it occurs somewhere where you’re not! That's the crux of it I guess! [laughs...] (K 323).

In summary, aircraft are both a blessing and a curse to wilderness visitors. They are valued in some respects, but for many people, they are seen as incompatible with traditional wilderness values in New Zealand such as challenge, escape and a sense of adventure: ‘I mean, really, if
you're taking mechanised transport into the remote area, it's just antithetical to what you're there for - it's just not what wilderness is about' (K 323).

9.6 Chapter summary

The aim of this chapter was to explore any concerns that respondents had regarding the future of wilderness in New Zealand. The majority were very aware that the values they associate with wilderness are unstable, and are influenced by broader societal forces. This was evidenced in their concerns about factors affecting wilderness and their (often extremely strong) desire to protect the values they associate with it. As noted in Chapter Five, a management publication (written in 1997) stated that, at that time, there were few concerns about ‘intrusions’ on New Zealand wilderness. This statement was based on a belief that the remoteness and inaccessibility of most wilderness areas in New Zealand, coupled with the strength of existing management strategies, would serve to protect wilderness from any harmful developments or ‘recreational intrusions’. In 2009, however, the situation appears to have changed and this optimism was certainly not shared by participants in this study.

Respondents expressed a variety of concerns (some more serious than others) about the future of New Zealand wilderness and the values they associate with it. Their main worries related to increasing visitor use (largely as a result of increasing international tourism to New Zealand), the commercialisation of wilderness (with commercial tourism as the main culprit) and improved access (mainly by aircraft). At the root of this unease was a fear that wilderness as it is currently understood may be altered and that the values and benefits currently associated with wilderness will no longer be available.

Of particular interest in this chapter is the fact that some actions which could actually ‘improve’ certain ‘purist’ wilderness qualities such as the ‘naturalness’ or ‘wildness’ of Fiordland (for example the removal of existing facilities or access routes) were also seen as a threat to existing wilderness meanings. This could mean one of two things – either that respondents simply wanted to protect what they knew and understood to be wilderness (i.e. by allowing no changes to the status quo), or, that they attribute multiple values to wilderness, including historic and cultural values which may seem to go against some of the more traditional wilderness ideals (i.e. those which suggest that true wilderness must be completely untouched by humans). Such cultural and historic values include activities like hunting (which may require motorised access to certain points in some instances)\(^{108}\) and facilities such as historic huts which serve as reminders of the country’s pioneering past. Concerns related to

\(^{108}\) In ‘purist’ terms, the deer are ‘unnatural’ in a New Zealand wilderness context, but if the Department of Conservation was able to eliminate all browsing mammals, the hunting resource would disappear completely.
cultural and historic values of wilderness such as these were almost entirely voiced by New Zealanders, suggesting that (as indicated in Chapter Eight) wilderness may be an important part of their individual and cultural identity. If this is the case, then this could have significant implications for the future management of wilderness, because any threats to existing wilderness meanings (whether this involves new developments or changes to existing conditions) are likely to be interpreted as threats to New Zealand wilderness users’ sense of identity and so regarded with fear and suspicion.

The following chapter in this thesis continues this theme of wilderness and cultural identity. It incorporates ideas from Chapters Eight and Nine with more data from New Zealand participants and considers the wider context in which wilderness meanings have been created in New Zealand. The final chapter (Chapter Eleven) summarises the research findings and presents an integrative discussion of wilderness in New Zealand. It finishes with some concluding thoughts about the future of wilderness in Western society.
Chapter 10
(Re)producing Wilderness Meanings

10.1 Introduction

In Chapter Eight, I described the core values of New Zealand wilderness, as viewed by study participants. I showed that these individuals have developed a particular understanding of what wilderness means, and what is (or is not) appropriate in a wilderness setting. In Chapter Nine, I then outlined the main factors that my respondents believe pose a threat to these values. I demonstrated that external influences such as increasing international tourism and improved access are feared and regarded with suspicion because current wilderness users believe they have the potential to change or destroy wilderness meanings. These understandings of New Zealand wilderness (and associated fears that they may be altered or lost) have developed in a particular socio-economic, ecological and geographic context, and have been shaped by a variety of social, political and historical forces at the local, national and global level. The objective of this current chapter is to describe some of the key factors which have played a role in the development and maintenance of these interpretations of New Zealand wilderness, and to highlight the cultural significance of wilderness to this particular sub-section of New Zealand society. Findings presented in this chapter will also provide the reader with further insight into the meaning behind each of the wilderness values discussed in Chapter Eight, and will contribute to an understanding of participants’ fears and concerns about wilderness which were described in Chapter Nine. As the focus of this chapter is the way wilderness meanings have been generated in a New Zealand context, the data used to furnish this discussion are limited to New Zealand wilderness users\(^{109}\).

The chapter is divided into two main sections. Section one considers the importance of wilderness to the identity of my respondents, and section two discusses the main implications of this close relationship between wilderness and national identity. These are place attachment and a strong desire to leave wilderness as a legacy for future generations of New Zealanders.

10.2 New Zealand wilderness, culture and identity

One of the key themes running throughout this thesis is that wilderness is a social and cultural construct, heavily influenced by social and political processes. An understanding of wilderness in New Zealand must therefore be examined in the context of the country’s unique

\(^{109}\) New Zealand wilderness users were defined as those people who indicated that they ‘normally lived’ in New Zealand.
social, historical and political situation. This includes a careful consideration of the relationship between wilderness and national identity. Although culture and identity were not specific topics of discussion in the interview schedule, it became increasingly evident throughout the research process that they were significant elements of the wilderness phenomenon. The topic of culture and identity permeated almost every aspect of wilderness discussed by respondents, illustrating that this was perhaps the key to understanding wilderness in contemporary New Zealand.

The following quotation is representative of many of the comments made by New Zealand respondents with regard to wilderness and their cultural identity:

*I think that wilderness is a big part of Kiwi identity, and we should protect it at all costs. It's a huge part of Kiwi culture - the whole exploring, going on adventures, getting into the bush, fishing, boating, hunting and having to fend for yourself* (F 134).

Many of the values my participants associated with wilderness (discussed in Chapter Eight) reflect key aspects of New Zealand society and culture. These values may therefore be important because they give wilderness participants a sense of who they are, both individually and collectively as a group or a nation. The specific ways in which wilderness contributes to the culture and identity of these individuals is the subject of discussion in the following four sections (10.2.1 to 10.2.4).

### 10.2.1 A means of national distinction

Wilderness was commonly described as something which distinguished New Zealand from other countries. Respondents believed that the mere existence of such large expanses of wild land rendered the country unique on an international scale, and led them to feel like they were the owners and guardians of something rare and precious. As expressed by ‘D’:

*And I think we need to make the most of our wilderness because, in a global sense, we are one of few countries that still have some areas that are relatively untouched, and we still have reasonably easy access to these areas. We've got huge areas that people just don't live in - and that's what makes us quite different to many similar places overseas* (D 007).

The unique nature that is allowed to flourish in wilderness was also seen as a feature of national distinction. As explained earlier in this thesis, New Zealand has a unique biogeography which means that it contains a huge number of species that are present nowhere else in the world. This was something that the New Zealanders in this study were extremely proud of and wanted to protect. Supporting the concept of wilderness was seen as a crucial
way of doing this. ‘N’ explained why protecting native New Zealand species and landscapes was so important to her as a New Zealander:

I think that conserving these environments is important to New Zealanders for their identity. Because a large part of our identity is about the land and the amazing landscape that we live in – so preserving that is really important (N 202).

It was not just preserving the wilderness environment that participants felt so strongly about, but also protecting the unique experiences that are available within these areas. As discussed in Chapter Eight, respondents placed huge value on the opportunities that they currently have to explore the country’s wilderness resource – to get away from urban society and everything associated with it (work, family ties, noise, pollution, man made constructions); to feel what it was like to live as a pioneer, and to experience a wholly natural environment that is uniquely ‘Kiwi’, in relative freedom and for very little cost. As ‘B’ explained:

And I think that this [wilderness] experience is really important to New Zealand society as well, because... [pauses]... I mean, one of the points of difference about what it means to be a New Zealander is that we do have this outdoors that we can go into and have experiences like this. And it is still there; despite, in many cases, our attempts to destroy it... This experience is something that is uniquely ours – it is uniquely New Zealand. I really value the opportunity to be in those wild lands, and I feel really proud that in New Zealand we do still have places like that where we can have a wilderness experience (B 067).

Thus for the New Zealanders in this study, one of the most valuable attributes of wilderness (and one of the most important justifications for its ongoing protection) was its uniqueness on a global scale. Wilderness in New Zealand is like nowhere else in the world – both because of its unique biogeographic character and the distinctly New Zealand experience it offers to visitors. Through recreating in wilderness and undertaking typically ‘Kiwi’ outdoor practices and activities, respondents are able to demonstrate their appreciation of, and commitment to protecting the New Zealand wilderness:

And we've really got to fight to protect the Kiwi wilderness culture. It's part of who we are. It makes us different from the rest of the world. I mean, where else can you put a pack on your back and just walk off and do your own thing for weeks at a time? (F 134).

Comments like this are also indicative of the concerns expressed by respondents about the future of their wilderness subculture. They suggest that wilderness as they know it, may soon be a thing of the past – like many of the extinct flora and fauna which once existed in New Zealand’s wild areas.
10.2.2 Protecting and practising cultural traditions

And I think that to really be able to appreciate and understand New Zealand and New Zealanders, you have to be able to appreciate the outdoors and this amazing wilderness that we’ve been blessed with (B 067).

In addition to providing an important means of national distinction, wilderness is also a way in which New Zealanders can practise cultural traditions, and can reinforce particular aspects of their identity. As explained in Chapter Eight, wilderness in New Zealand is believed to represent an historical affinity with the land and the natural environment. It is a cultural icon and a cultural practice for the New Zealanders in this study (and perhaps for many other New Zealanders). ‘N’ explained how wilderness provided an opportunity for her to connect with the New Zealand landscape, and to understand more about her ‘Kiwi roots’:

I think that tramping and these kinds of trips are a cultural experience for New Zealanders. [pauses...] ... I hesitate to use the word spiritual, but there's definitely some sort of bonding with the land - it's great to get out there and to feel that you're actually part of the place, because this is where you're from (N 202).

This feeling was evident in many of the discussions with New Zealand respondents. Most of them had grown up in an environment where they were surrounded by the ‘Kiwi outdoors culture’, and so they had been instilled with the key wilderness values from a very young age. This became increasingly evident as participants spoke about their long family histories of back country and wilderness trips. For example:

Well I suppose I've been doing trips like this.... God I was just about brought up in the bush! Us kids, we were always chasing rabbits or possums or anything that moved. We were always mucking around the bush somewhere, and we just grew up with that way of life (R 195).

The family was always involved in outdoor pursuits - whether it be yachting or fishing or tramping or hunting, so I guess it's always been with me - an interest in getting into the outdoors and into wilderness environments (S 152).

As far back as many of them could remember, these New Zealanders had been learning about what wilderness and the New Zealand back country culture meant, why it was important, and how they should behave within a wilderness setting:

My father used to look at the pioneering spirit of our forefathers and encourage that to come through in our education and our upbringing. When other people would go to places like Wanaka and socialise with other families, we'd be out in the middle of nowhere, fishing or whatever - just learning those values that I still hold today (S 152).

The values and practices learnt on these family trips have been passed down through generations of New Zealanders, and visiting wilderness has become a significant part of their
life. ‘A’ told me how his father had taught him about wilderness and during their many trips to the back country when he was younger. An important element of New Zealand wilderness, for him, is being able to practise and reinforce these values which he associates strongly with being a New Zealander:

Because I’ve done it, and my father’s done it, and his father’s done it. It's just a great experience. And I suppose it goes back to that real pioneer feeling you get when you’re out there – just you and no-one else; relying on your own skills and abilities. (A 258).

A number of respondents indicated that they were continuing this practice by passing on the same ideas and values to their children, and their children’s children. This helps to explain how traditional wilderness values remain so strong amongst certain groups in New Zealand society. For them, wilderness is part of their heritage:

The outdoor values and things about wilderness I learnt as a child have most definitely stayed with me - through the way I bring up my family - we'll take the kids away on camping holidays to the back blocks somewhere; somewhere nice and really remote, rather than in a camping ground with all the other people…and that’s really important to us (S 152).

A similar view was expressed in a recent outdoor recreation publication:

Our country’s outdoor recreation culture has existed for a long time, and many in the outdoor recreation community have a very well developed sense of belonging. Often they are the very people who have fought long and hard in their spare time to protect our back county… Generations of Kiwis in our own back country have entrenched this ethos of belonging more deeply. We live here; it belongs to us, and we to it.

(Spearpoint 2007, p. 34)

New Zealand Wilderness has more than recreational value for those people who use it. For New Zealanders in particular, visiting wilderness is not just about going tramping or camping or climbing or hunting. It is about taking part in a long-held, and highly valued, tradition of escaping to; exploring and connecting with wild New Zealand nature and the New Zealand landscape. It’s about enjoying the whole combination of ‘being out there in the bush’, ‘learning about the environment’, ‘enjoying the landscape’ and ‘spending quality time with your mates’ and appreciating what it means to be a New Zealander. This is illustrated in the following interview extracts:

I mean for me, the purpose of going is to get out into the wilderness and to enjoy the New Zealand landscape and the experience. If you shoot something, then it's a bonus. Whatever activity you’re in there doing, it's more about the experience and what it means to you – that’s the real trophy (F 134).

And it’s definitely about much more than the hunting. We go there for the whole experience. We’ve seen some amazing things - some beautiful sights. We've seen
tākāhe, kiwi, moreporks, great scenery and New Zealand landscapes - and so we're never disappointed when we go in there because it's just such an amazing place. It's the enjoyment you get out of that whole experience – just being a part of it (B 196).

10.2.3 Connecting with the past
Wilderness also provides a valuable way for New Zealanders to connect with their past. It offers the opportunity to explore New Zealand’s natural and historic heritage, and provides a particular representation of New Zealand society – past and present: ‘wilderness shows us where we came from’ (F134). Wilderness provides important connections to (what my respondents clearly believe to be) a proud pioneering heritage, and enables them to share stories and learn about their ancestors. Respondents saw this as an important way of developing a sense of cultural identity - a way of ‘re-living’ and ‘taking part in’ a long history of association with the land and exploring. As explained by ‘J’ and ‘J’:

> When we visit these areas, we're maintaining, or taking part in something that has been going on in this country for over a hundred years, and that's very important to a lot of us, because in some small way, we're part of that hunting history (J 995).

> And you can read back to when people used to go in there in the 20s and 30s and you know you're doing the same kinds of things in the same kinds of places as they did - and experiencing what they were experiencing (J 194).

New Zealand participants often enjoyed visiting areas of wilderness that contained a significant amount of human history – be it exploration, indigenous or early occupation or wildlife management. Encounters with evidence of past human use of the Park served to remind them of their pioneering ancestors, and provided important links to their past. This is illustrated in the following diary extracts:

> It was nice to see the old tools the miners left on the side of the track in 1903. It's always good to be able to locate a bit of history in the area you are in – much more interesting (Diary 194).

> Fascinating to come across the odd scotch thistle – a reminder of the old days when people lived here. Hope these ‘relics of the past’ are not exterminated as they are of cultural value (Diary 62).

> Climbed around to cave where some people had built a boat a long time ago. There were 3 stumps in the ground with a groove in the middle. I really liked it – it showed great hope! (Diary 188).

They frequently commented on the strong connections between wilderness and the country’s Maori and European history, and expressed great interest in exploring and following the tracks of early New Zealanders. ‘B’ had read a number of books about the history of
Fiordland National Park before he went on this particular trip, and felt that the knowledge he had acquired through this added immensely to his overall satisfaction:

_"I've always been interested in the history of Fiordland - I've read quite a bit about it over the years. I mean it fascinated me that back in the 20's and 30's, old Murrell went right up to Fowlers Pass, and he had a track cut right into Gaer Sound. I've been into Pickersgill harbour where Captain Cook built his observatory - and it's interesting to look at those stumps of trees and to think that the world's greatest navigator was there. And I think too about the sealers and whalers, and how on earth the Maori could live there, I don't know! I mean it's interesting to think about where they came from and how they got there in the first place, and also because it's one of the first places of European contact, down in Fiordland... So yea, I think it's a pretty special place (B 067)."

To a large extent, it is these connections with the past that have led many of the New Zealanders to develop such a strong attachment to wilderness: ‘It’s part of who we are’, ‘I think it's just that sense of history and everything that's been before you’ (J 194). ’J’ explained why this aspect of wilderness was so important to him:

_"I think that we visit these places because of an affinity with the land – we just feel part of the place. The history of what's gone on in that Fiordland area is just phenomenal - just fantastic. And to feel a part of that - to go right back beyond that day when Europeans arrived in New Zealand, and to ask 'why did we come to New Zealand?' is a really important part of wilderness in this country. I think that a lot of New Zealanders, irrespective of where they came from originally, have a really strong connection to the land (J 995)."

This sense of attachment is the focus of section 10.3.

The historical value of wilderness was particularly important to the hunters in this study. They expressed a desire to ‘connect with the hunters of the old days’ and to re-live the experiences of their forefathers. In discussions about the history of wilderness hunting, ‘J’ told me about a historical book on wapiti hunting in Fiordland that he had been involved in putting together. The sense of pride he felt at being part of this legacy was clearly visible as he described it to me:

_"Oh the history of Fiordland is so important to me - particularly because I had the privilege of measuring up one of Eddie Herrick's heads for a book Bruce Batten did on the Wapiti. Eddie was a landed gentry in the late 1800s/1900s, and him and his wife hunted extensively through Westland and Fiordland - he was one of those real icon hunters of the time. So yea, the historical aspect is a really important part of wilderness for me (J 995)."

These respondents all displayed an immense respect for the original Fiordland explorers, and many were still in regular contact with the early hunters who had discovered most of the famous hunting blocks. ‘R’ spent some time telling me about his close friendships with
several of the ‘great hunters’ from ‘back in the day’. The following quotation illustrates some of the passion he and other hunters like him feel for Fiordland and its opportunities for wilderness recreation:

*I mean, you talk to a lot of the old people - the old hunters who explored the place and opened up the place - they're the same as us; they're just so passionate about the place - even till this day. I particularly know Jack Lattrels, (who a lot of the places are named after) very well. He's 94 now, and he always rings me up - like a lot of those old fellas do – to find ask how our trips have been going and all that. There's a few around like that - Jack Latterels, and Colin Davies, Jack Mackenzie. They used to spend a lot of time down there in the 40s and 50s, and a lot of the places are named after them. They're always hanging out for news on Fiordland. I had a phone call from Colin Davies the other night (he's 85). He's always ringing up for any stories or news on the place... and we just talk about relevant things, and all the bird life and things that are going on in there... It's funny - a lot of them; once they're too old to go in there... it's like there's nothing else worth living for... [pauses]... (R 195).

As explained in Chapter Nine, these historical associations with human use of wilderness do appear to conflict with the more ‘traditional’ or ‘purist’ views of wilderness. For example, a desire to preserve historical remnants of human presence in wilderness does not seem to be compatible with the legislative documents which state that any physical developments ‘should be removed or no longer maintained in order to retain wilderness qualities’ (Wilderness Advisory Group 1985). These contradictions serve to highlight the complexity of the wilderness concept. They illustrate that the wilderness in New Zealand is not entirely about removing every trace of human influence, and that it may be important to preserve cultural links to the past where they already exist in wilderness.

The human history of New Zealand wilderness clearly has significant value for the New Zealanders who visit it. This helps to explain why a number of respondents saw the removal of certain huts and facilities as a threat. It highlights a complex issue - that perhaps (as discussed in section 9.2) present-day human use (e.g. huts, tracks, motorised transport) is generally not acceptable to wilderness users, but that past use is ok. This is supportive of what Cronon (1995) termed the ‘frontier myth’ (embracing the past and the ‘good old days’), and again highlights the socially constructed and culturally specific aspects of wilderness. It is a philosophy which reflects the central (and somewhat paradoxical) goal of the National Parks Act 1980 – to protect New Zealand’s natural and historic heritage for all to enjoy.

10.2.4 Maintaining a collective national identity

New Zealand nature helps New Zealand people define who we are, what makes us similar to each other and distinct from other people (N. Clark 2004, p. 6)
Through the lengthy discussions I held with New Zealand respondents, it became increasingly clear that, for them, wilderness (and spending time in wilderness) embodies many of the defining characteristics of New Zealand society and what it means to be a New Zealander. These characteristics include freedom, egalitarianism, adventure, exploration, self sufficiency and the ability to withstand hardship – particularly with regard to surviving in the outdoors.

As discussed in Chapter Eight, New Zealand wilderness is generally free from rules and regulations about where people can and can’t go, meaning that wilderness visitors are able to experience a great sense of freedom. This freedom was likened to the sensations the first settlers in New Zealand had when they arrived in their ‘new land’. Respondents felt that their desire to experience wilderness was part of their Kiwi ‘pioneering mentality’, which encouraged them to explore and make the most of their country:

*And I think part of it is looking over some different country - yearning that pioneering spirit to go and see something different, to take on a new challenge, and to discover something new* (S 152).

Other pioneering characteristics that wilderness users were able to practise during their visits included being self sufficient, surviving the elements, gathering food, and generally living in the outdoors: ‘It’s the hunter/gatherer mentality, like the pioneers – out there getting food for the family’ (S152): ‘It's kind of a pioneering feeling I suppose - where you're out there in the elements and you've got to fend for yourself, and I really enjoy that about it’ (A 258).

Wilderness was also described as egalitarian in the sense that anyone can go there – irrespective of social class - if they are willing to make the effort. This is another of the key attributes of the ‘new world’ that the first settlers to New Zealand strove to embed in the national psyche. As noted in Chapter Nine, The right to roam freely on public land is an integral part of New Zealand outdoor culture, and one of which kiwis are very proud. Several respondents believed that wilderness symbolised this socio-democratic ideology of equity and egalitarianism in terms of access to outdoor recreation opportunities. ‘B’ described wilderness as ‘a great social leveller’ because of the way it attracts people from all parts of society, and disregards many of the social rules and hierarchies which govern modern life in the Western world:

*And one of the things I like most about wilderness is that it attracts people from all walks of life. Like the guy I went on my last trip with, he was a truck driver, and the other guy was an engineer, and I’m a vet! You couldn’t get three more diverse people. You might be from totally different areas of life, but you still have this one passion; this one thing in common, and that’s the wilderness. And I just love the fact that it encompasses all spheres of society - that makes it a really special experience* (B 196).
This idea that everyone has the same opportunity to access wilderness, regardless of social status, reflects a commonly held belief in New Zealand that national parks and conservation areas were created for the ‘common man’ to enjoy. Settlers of the ‘new world’ wanted to ‘be free of the old world class and tenure barriers which might prevent them from enjoying ready access to the wildest and most beautiful places in their new land (Molloy & Potton 2007, p. 23). Most of the original British settlers in New Zealand were from labouring and lower middle class backgrounds (Lochhead 1994). They came to New Zealand to escape the poverty afflicting the rural classes of Britain; seeking a life where opportunities were equal, and where the honest, hardworking pioneer could make a better life for himself and his family: ‘The colony offered those with energy and determination a route to self-improvement and the hope of a fresh start, for which there was limited opportunity at home’ (ibid. p. 12). Wilderness and the New Zealand back country culture can therefore be regarded as a manifestation of this long-established cultural tradition. Visiting wilderness is an expression of the traditional egalitarian ethic which forms part of New Zealand cultural identity:

The wilderness thing, it’s part of the Kiwi egalitarian lifestyle, and it was established by the English immigrants who came here back in the 1800s - they were often peasants who’d been down-trodden by the British class system, and the private ownership of natural resources. Whereas here it's public ownership - everybody is allowed to go in, to get off their backsides and make the effort to develop the skills and fitness to do it. If you really do want to, then your average Kiwi - whatever their social status - should be able to go to these areas as long as they're willing to put in the effort.... I mean the whole set-up of conservation land; public ownership of game and wildlife, of land and water is like that in New Zealand - you don't own the rights to any of it. It's just so good that it's like that here (R 230).

The strong desire to ensure that wilderness remains egalitarian also helps to explain why many of the New Zealand participants were against any developments (such as commercial tourism and motorised access) which would threaten this ideology – for example by making wilderness ‘easier’ or allowing people to ‘buy/cheat their way’ into wilderness because they have the financial means to do so.\footnote{It is important to note that wilderness experiences may not actually be open to people from all social classes and backgrounds because of the financial cost and time commitment of such a trip, and this may increasingly the case if the use of motorised access to remote areas continues to grow.}

Other aspects of wilderness discussed in Chapter Eight are also commonly used in descriptions of the stereotypical New Zealander. Kiwis are, for example, typically characterised (by themselves and by outsiders) as independent, with a sense of adventure and exploration, an affinity with nature, a connection with the landscape, an ability to be self-sufficient and to withstand tough conditions. ‘S’ highlighted this in terms of the ‘self sufficiency’ aspect of wilderness:
This element of self-sufficiency; looking after yourself if anything goes wrong is really important too, because I think that's what we're brought up with in New Zealand. We talk about the Scottish independence in our family, so I think that comes through in me on these trips (S 152).

This notion is supported by Barr (2001), who noted that since European arrival in New Zealand, there has been ‘an ethic of exploration, adventure and going into the unknown, both for pragmatic reasons such as finding grazing land or gold, and for the recreation gained from discovering untrodden areas and scaling unclimbed peaks’ (p. 18), and that expeditions such as these are still just as popular today because of the strong historical and cultural associations with New Zealand identity.

This finding is given further support by other recent cultural literature in New Zealand. For example, in ‘Culture Wise New Zealand’, Chesters & Irvine (2007) noted that a common characteristic of New Zealanders is their ‘pioneering spirit’: ‘Kiwis are independent, inventive and rugged, partly because their forebears had to adapt to a demanding, isolated life in a rugged country. This pioneering spirit remains a defining characteristic of Kiwis today’ (p. 33). They also proposed that: ‘Their [New Zealanders’] adventurous nature means that they like to explore new places’ (p. 34). This sense of adventure was clearly exhibited by participants in the current study through their desire to explore the country’s wild areas. It may again have a lot to do with New Zealand’s status as a young, pioneering nation of adventurers and explorers. Much of the contemporary Kiwi identity\(^{111}\) is based around the idea that New Zealanders are adventurous types who ‘get out there and discover things’. The national media frequently glorifies Kiwis who demonstrate these characteristics through adventurous travels or activities such as climbing Mount Everest (Sir Edmund Hillary, Figure 10.1), sailing solo around the globe via the frozen arctic Northwest passage (Graeme Kendall), rowing 4800km from Tenerife to Barbados (Rob Hammill), winning the Whitbread Round the World yacht race (Sir Peter Blake) and flying solo from England to Australia in 1934 (Jean Batten).

The extent to which this stereotype accurately represents the ‘average’ New Zealander today is, however, questionable. Over 85 per cent of the population now lives in urban areas (compared to less than 40 percent in the late 1800s), and fears have been expressed that this has caused them to ‘lose their hardy pioneering spirit and become softened by the experience of urban living’ (Statistics New Zealand 2009a, p. 2). Nevertheless, it is clear that the

\(^{111}\) I use identity here to mean the way in which many New Zealanders like to characterise themselves. This does not necessarily mean that it is an accurate representation of New Zealand society.
adventurous, tough, rugged image is a stereotype which the New Zealanders in this study (and broader society) are keen to maintain - whether it is accurate or not.

**Figure 10.1: Sir Edmund Hillary (left) on his successful 1953 Everest expedition**

Recreating in wilderness is a way in which New Zealanders can practise, develop and reinforce this stereotype. ‘S’ was one of several respondents who discussed the adventurous aspect of New Zealand identity:

> I think that we still have that pioneering, adventurous spirit – that’s what these trips are all about, and Kiwis are renowned for it aren’t they?! Kiwis are out there all over the world, taking on new challenges with that pioneering spirit... I think they’re getting out there because they want to show the world what it means to be a kiwi (S 152).

Wilderness is a source of national pride, and way to maintain a sense of identity and solidarity amongst other New Zealanders. It can provide a reaffirmation of ‘who we are’, and is a way to put into practice many of the attributes Kiwis are traditionally believed to possess. Viewing wilderness in this way (i.e. as a cultural construct) helps to explain why many of the people I spoke to felt so strongly about protecting it – because the characteristics it symbolises are an important part of their personal and cultural identity. Any potential threats to wilderness in New Zealand may therefore be interpreted as a threat to their identity.
10.3 It’s our wilderness!

The cultural construction of wilderness in New Zealand is clearly complex, and is inextricably interlinked with the country’s heritage and pioneering history. One of the main consequences of this is that New Zealand wilderness users have developed a powerful attachment to wilderness as a place and a concept. As illustrated in Chapters Eight and Nine, respondents (in particular, New Zealanders) displayed a strong sense of ownership towards the wilderness resource, and an equally strong desire to protect it for future generations. These ideas are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

10.3.1 Attachment to wilderness

The strength of feeling and attachment to the Fiordland wilderness\textsuperscript{112} was manifest in the research diaries, and became more apparent during the interviews with New Zealand participants. According to the Department of Conservation Community Relations Manager, the primary reason why the recent Fiordland National Park planning process took such an extraordinary length of time was because of the deep attachments that so many people had to the Park (Interview: Martin Rodd, Department of Conservation). A key outcome of the public consultation process was a greater understanding of the deeply felt passion that people had for Fiordland (Interview: Roger McNaughton, Southland Conservation Board). The strong emotional and affective ties which respondents in this study felt towards the Park are illustrated in the following extract from an interview with ‘F’, a hunter who had been visiting Fiordland for many years. When asked how he felt about the place, he spoke excitedly without a pause and in an extremely animated way for several minutes about his love for the area. Along with many of the other regular wilderness users I spoke to, his passion for wilderness was unmistakable through the emotive language he used, the vivid expressions, the gestures, and the glassy-eyed, far-away, contented look on his face when he had finished speaking:

\textit{And so can you tell me a bit about Fiordland?}

\textit{Oh yeah, for sure! I mean it's just an unbelievable place; it really is. I'm so passionate about it – it's just a fantastic place. It means a hell of a lot to me... the Fiordland tops on a good day; I don't reckon there's anywhere better in the world to be... It's rugged... it's big... it's huge! I mean look at those hills (gestures out the window), they're just little mounds in comparison! Y'know - you're in a Fiordland valley and you look up and the mountains just seem huge - everything's big. Everywhere else just...}

\textsuperscript{112} It is important to reiterate here that this research was based on a case study of Fiordland National Park, and so many of the discussions (in particular, those related to place attachment) were specific to this area. Given the seeming importance of wider social and cultural influences in determining participants’ views of wilderness, however, it is likely that the research would have produced similar findings (and levels of attachment) if it had been undertaken in another area of New Zealand's wilderness.
doesn't look quite as big. Fiordland is just so big; so impressive... as far as you can see, there's snow-capped mountain tops; the bush is fantastic, the wildlife is fantastic - y'know, the blue ducks, the takahe, the wekas.... You'll see things down there that you just won't see anywhere else. And there's that whole mystique thing as well – you never know what you might come across... I just think it's a very special place; it's mysterious, it's grandiose - it's just unbelievable... [laughs]... (F 134).

Many New Zealand participants had spent significant amounts of time in remote areas of Fiordland over the years, and felt that this had led to the development of a strong attachment to the area. For example, ‘J’ said: ‘Well I'm not from down south, but over the years, I've spent more than a hundred days in Fiordland. So yeah, I have a real affinity with the place’ (J 995). For these people, Fiordland was a place of refuge, a unique and special place, to which they wanted to return year after year. One respondent even called it his ‘church’:

*It's my church being up there (in the wilderness areas). Somebody else might go to church on Sunday, but Fiordland's my church [pauses in thought...] ... I just love it – it's a magical place* (M 244).

Several of the tour operators also displayed significant emotional attachments to the Park.

One operator explained how, despite the fact that he had been visiting the same areas of Fiordland for over twenty years (for work and for pleasure), he still felt the same passion and excitement for the area every time he visited:

*Fiordland to me is just a place where things make sense. Y'know - where every little thing has its time and its place and its purpose - right down from the big beech trees to the fungal threads, to the birds, to the pollinators, to the insects. Everything has a purpose. I don't find that in the real world.... Some mornings I'd like to throw a brick through the television because the human world just makes no sense, but when you know Fiordland and you know the attractions of the place, you realise just what a wonderful place it is - what a well-balanced system it is. It doesn't need mankind! It just doesn't. And this might sum it up a bit better. I've been to Milford maybe 2 and a half thousand times, and I still go up the road on my days off, just because it's such an interesting and beautiful place* (TO1).

Respondents also expressed strong connections with the wilderness experience (or the concept of wilderness), as well as the place. Several even compared their passion for wilderness to an addiction or to being in love – a feeling so strong that they just have to keep going back for more. As illustrated by ‘B’ and ‘M’:

*It's a very spiritual, very individual experience. It's not something you can reproduce elsewhere, and so once you get hooked on it, you want to come back year after year - it's almost like an addiction! You get bitten by it!* (B 196).

*You can't describe it to other people really. You can't describe what it's like out there for you. Other people have got their own thing that they can't do without, and the wilderness is my thing* (M 244).
When asked exactly what it was about the Fiordland wilderness that they felt so attached to, respondents found it difficult to put their finger on one particular thing: ‘What is special to me about Fiordland’s wilderness? Well it would be hard to write an essay on that topic that would cover all of it!’ (J 995). ‘J’ believed it was a combination of the landscape, wildlife, location and the sense of belonging he felt whenever he was there:

*What is it about Fiordland? Now that’s a tricky one! It's the challenge, the remoteness, the history, the animals, the sense of belonging. It's the different levels of bush that you come across - from sea to tussock tops in such a short distance - it's absolutely fantastic! Last year, I took heaps of photos of these little tarns up on the tops - absolutely beautiful! And I thought 'I'll take lots of photos because I'll probably never come back here again', and we ended up going back there again this year, and I took twice as many photos! [laughs...]... It's just one of those spots - you can't help yourself. It's just a magical place (J 995).*

‘J’ attributed his attachment to the mystique and intrigue of the area; the fact that he could feel like the first person to have ever been there, and that he was never quite sure what he might encounter around the next corner:

*I don't think there's any other place like it (Fiordland). I mean, the first time I went in, I'd never seen any other place like it.... It's just... It's just... [pauses...]. You walk in there, and you know that some of the places you're walking; nobody has ever set foot before - so it's partly that... It's just the whole place; there's something about it - I mean I've tried to get back in there every year since, and all the other people that I've taken in there for the first time have tried to get back in there every year since (J 194).*

Most people agreed that it was due to a unique combination of factors, including the size, the rugged terrain, the remoteness, the natural environment, the wildlife, the dramatic scenery, the absence of human influence, the history, and the fact that New Zealanders have been exploring the area for such a long period of time.

Some of the more experienced wilderness users (who had been visiting Fiordland for over thirty years) said they felt a ‘special ambiance’ in the Park – a sense that they were experiencing a unique and precious part of New Zealand, and one which could not be matched elsewhere. As ‘R’ wrote in his diary:

*I said to John, I can always feel some sort of atmosphere here in Fiordland. Something I feel no other place in New Zealand... You really get the feeling that this is a very special part of New Zealand... this place is different – there is a feeling of being totally separate (Diary 195).*

‘R’ felt so strongly about the area that he personified it in many of his daily diary descriptions, illustrating the same sort of connection that people display with their loved ones:

*This is very typical Fiordland – put the hard work in, treat her with respect and she will turn something on for you... Fiordland is more than bush and mountains. She*
breathes. She has an atmosphere, if you spend enough time in there and open your heart to her, you can feel it [emphasis added] (Diary 195).

This particular respondent displayed the same strength of feeling for the place when I interviewed him. As illustrated in the following quotation:

In the last 10 years, I've spent over a year in Fiordland! And I've hunted Stewart Island; I've hunted the West Coast, and everywhere else, but Fiordland has got an atmosphere about it - I don't know what it is - it's something you don't feel anywhere else. People either like it or really hate it. You can go in there and you just feel at home... And people either do or they don't... It's funny, because you look at people who've hunted there over the years, and the people who fall in love with the place end up getting more success. Probably because they - and it's not that they spend more time in there - it's that they know how to act... I don't know what it is... There's something breathing in there, and I just get along with it. I fit in (R 195).

Comments like these demonstrate intense connections with the (Fiordland) wilderness. These strong feelings and attachments are likely to be due, in part, to the place itself, but also a result of the enormous time, physical, financial and emotional commitment that participants invest in trips like this. It is unlikely that these experiences or places can be easily substituted.

Interestingly, the level of attachment to Fiordland did not appear to be any more pronounced for those people who lived in the Southland region. However, regular visitors to the area, and people who visited the extremely remote areas of the Park did tend to demonstrate much stronger feelings of attachment. Individuals who were least likely to show signs of attachment to the area were overseas visitors and people walking the marked tracks (as opposed to untracked wilderness). Although these people were often passionate about the experience, and frequently commented on the beautiful scenery, few displayed the same intense connections with the area as the regular Fiordland visitors.

This differing level of attachment felt by frequent users and new users ('tourists') could help to explain why some New Zealanders harboured feelings of resentment towards international tourists who would typically only visit the area once. These findings are also an indication of the potential for conflict between these two groups of wilderness users. Research suggests that when someone feels less attached to a resource or place, they are less likely to treat it with the same level of respect and understanding as someone who has been going there for years and regards it as a special place (Driver & Bassett 1975; Gibbons & Ruddell 1995; Jacob & Schreyer 1980; Watson et al. 1991; Williams et al. 1992). As demonstrated in Chapter Nine, a number of New Zealand respondents feared that this may be the case with international visitors to New Zealand wilderness.
10.3.2 Desire to protect wilderness for future generations

An understanding of the cultural value of New Zealand wilderness helps to explain why respondents (New Zealanders in particular) have developed such an attachment to wilderness, and why they felt so strongly about protecting it. This strength of feeling became very clear when I asked interviewees how they felt about the future of wilderness in New Zealand. Wilderness was overwhelmingly seen as a legacy which is crucially important to protect for future generations. A small selection of responses can be seen below:

**And so what are your thoughts on the future of wilderness in New Zealand?**

*Oh it's really important to protect the wilderness experience, because I'd like my children and my grandchildren to have the opportunity to do those things when they're older - to have those experiences like we did (J 995).*

*Well I'd love the wilderness experience to be protected for my children. I'd really love them to be able to have that opportunity to not see people for 10 days, to not see a road or a track or a signpost or a building, to make up your mind where you want to go, where there are no set paths. I'd like to think that other people will still be doing that same kind of thing in years to come, and I'm sure that other people do love that kind of experience and feel just as passionately as me (M 244).*

*I would really like it if these wilderness experiences were available to future generations. I think that it's part of our heritage, and so it needs to be available for people in the future (D 007).*

*I'd like to think that my son could go in there again, and that he can have the same experience. I'd like to think that my grandchildren could do the same thing. And that their grandchildren after them would still have the opportunity to see New Zealand as it was before everybody came here (B 067).*

These responses reflect the wording in the National Parks Act 1980 which states that National Parks shall be ‘preserved in perpetuity’ for their ‘intrinsic worth and for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of the public’, because ‘their preservation is in the national interest’. They also illustrate the symbolic value of wilderness – the fact that it is not just seen as somewhere where people can go to undertake wilderness recreation, but it is also a legacy of the past, and a gift which wilderness participants want to be able to give to their children, in the hope that they too will be able to uphold the values and traditions which it embodies. If New Zealand wilderness was eventually changed beyond recognition, it would be a cause of great sadness to existing wilderness users, and possibly the nation as a whole, for it would represent a loss of part of the country’s national heritage.
10.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored the theme of wilderness as a manifestation of New Zealand culture and identity. It has shown that wilderness has much more than recreational value for the New Zealanders who visit it. For the participants in this study, wilderness embodies many of the values that define what it means to be a New Zealander – such as freedom, egalitarianism, being part of the landscape, protecting and connecting with the natural environment, self-reliance and self-sufficiency, and ‘good hard yakker’! Wilderness is about where they came from, how they came to be there, and the traditional Kiwi values that these experiences symbolise. New Zealand wilderness participants are proud of their pioneering heritage, and one way in which they can demonstrate, protect and maintain this is through spending time in wilderness. They want their children to have the same opportunities to explore their cultural identity through wilderness, and to use it as a way of learning what it means to ‘be a Kiwi’. This is likely to be at the root of the concerns discussed in Chapter Nine, about the experience being diluted or lost due to increasing development or increasing visitation.

Conceptualising wilderness as a social and cultural phenomenon helps to explain why the meanings and values discussed in Chapter Eight are so important to wilderness users (and, in particular, New Zealanders). Such a view also provides a basis for understanding how and why respondents expressed such strong feelings of antipathy towards external influences which may threaten to destabilise or destroy these meanings. In particular, an understanding of the cultural value of wilderness shows us why international tourists and commercial tourists (or any ‘new’ users of the resource) are characterised in such a negative way by traditional users of wilderness. Because of the strong cultural and historic value of wilderness, existing users (with clearly defined norms about what is appropriate and expected in wilderness) are highly likely to feel threatened by any external influence which has the potential to alter existing wilderness meanings.

The final chapter in this thesis re-visits the original research questions and summarises the key findings through the use of an integrative model. It concludes with ideas for future research in this area, and some thoughts about the future of wilderness in Western society.
Chapter 11
Discussion and Conclusions

11.1 Introduction

This thesis examined the complex phenomenon of wilderness in New Zealand. The broad research objectives were to explore the meanings and values of New Zealand wilderness to wilderness users and to identify factors which may threaten these meanings. The project began as applied research for the Department of Conservation. It then became a doctoral study at Lincoln University. As noted earlier in the thesis, the tension between the original, applied, nature of the study and its conversion into a scholarly piece of work required careful consideration throughout the course of my research. It was crucial for me to constantly scrutinise my position as a researcher, and to remind myself that I was now a social scientist in the independent realm of academia, rather than a DOC employee.

The research findings reflect this tension (although hopefully in a positive sense!), and have both practical and academic relevance. On a practical level, this study has revealed important information (which did not exist prior to this research taking place) about the users, and use, of the New Zealand wilderness resource. It has also identified several important management issues which may need to be addressed in the future, and has highlighted the value of using qualitative methods to explore complex social phenomena such as wilderness. On a conceptual level, this research has demonstrated the relevance and utility of socio-cultural approaches to wilderness. It has located wilderness within a socio-cultural framework, taking account of the social and historical context within which wilderness meanings have developed in New Zealand. In doing so, it has broadened the scope of existing wilderness research and has built on the small number of social science studies of wilderness. Further, it has provided key theoretical insights into the meanings, values and cultural significance of wilderness in New Zealand and wider Western society.

Following a brief review of the research methods and approach, this chapter presents a summary of the key research findings, including an integrative model to help illustrate the theoretical relationship between the various aspects of the study. Models are simplified ways of viewing complex situations. They can never fully represent social science research findings (Hofstede 2001). I have chosen to use a model to illustrate my research findings because I believe it will help the reader to visualise how the various chapters of my research fit together. As with any aspect of scientific research, the researcher’s subjectivity enters the process, and
therefore the model reflects my thoughts and ideas, as well as describing the phenomena under study. Due to the applied nature of the research, a section on managerial recommendations is also included in this chapter. This section is fairly brief, however, as it is likely that a more detailed report will be written specifically for managers on completion of the thesis. The chapter finishes with ideas about future research in this area, and some concluding thoughts about wilderness in New Zealand and contemporary Western society.

11.2 Researching wilderness

As discussed in Chapter Six, attempting to gather on-site data from wilderness users about their experiences is a difficult task. In order to overcome the temporal and spatial constraints facing New Zealand wilderness researchers, this study used a new approach which involved contacting wilderness users before their visits; asking them to keep a daily diary during their trip, and then interviewing them afterwards. This method proved very successful, and the quality and quantity of information presented in the present thesis is a testament to this.

A case study approach was deemed to be the most appropriate for this research (for reasons discussed in Chapter Six), and the chosen site was Fiordland National Park in south west New Zealand. Fiordland National Park is the largest and most remote national park in the country, and a large proportion of it is designated or managed as wilderness. In order to be eligible to take part in the research, participants had to be visiting a remote or wilderness area of the Park, for more than two days, and travelling ‘under their own steam’. A total of 67 people completed research diaries, and 18\(^{113}\) of these were interviewed about their experiences. Conservation managers and tour operators were also interviewed as part of this research, although data from these sources was used primarily for context in the final thesis.

The theoretical approach adopted for this study was also innovative – at least on a New Zealand scale. It represented a move away from the traditional cognitive behavioural model adopted by the majority of wilderness researchers in the past half a century (e.g. Brown & Hass 1980; Feingold 1979; Kaplan 1974; Kellert 1998; Manfredo et al. 1983), and used a socio-cultural approach – as advocated by social researchers in a variety of disciplines and fields of study such as anthropology, sociology, geography, environmental management, landscape research, tourism and, more recently, wilderness studies (e.g. Egoz et al. 2006; Law & Urry 2004; Ley 1981; Mansvelt & Perkins 1998; Patterson et al. 1998; Perkins & Thorns 2001; Shields 1991; Watson et al. 2003; Williams & Carr 1993; Williams 2000, 2002a).

\(^{113}\) As noted in Chapter Six, one additional wilderness recreationist was recruited for interview through the ‘snowballing’ method.
Rather than viewing wilderness as a static and clearly defined phenomenon with measurable attributes, I attempted to locate wilderness in a socio-cultural framework which explicitly recognised the fluidity and shifting nature of the concept and the social-geographic influences on its construction. As such, this study has expanded the scope of the socio-cultural wilderness research undertaken in North America by authors such as Borrie et al. 2002; Patterson et al. 1998; Watson & Williams 1995 and Williams 2000. An important outcome of this study has been an examination of the relationship between the meanings and values associated with New Zealand wilderness, and the social context within which they have been created.

11.3 Dimensions of New Zealand wilderness

The various dimensions of wilderness identified in this research are illustrated in Figure 11.1. The three main elements of this model (‘origins’, ‘wilderness in contemporary New Zealand’ and ‘forces of change’) are described in this section, followed by a discussion of each of the individual components and how they fit together.

Figure 11.1: Dimensions of wilderness in New Zealand

Figure 11.1 represents the dimensions of wilderness identified in the Fiordland National Park case study. Given the significance of broader social factors in creating this construct of
wilderness, it is likely that the model has applicability for most of New Zealand’s wild areas – including gazetted and non-gazetted wilderness. In broad terms, the model illustrates the eight core values which combine to form the dominant construction of wilderness in contemporary New Zealand society; the key factors which have been influential in creating this construct (the ‘origins’); and the main forces of change acting upon it.

The underlying assumption of the model (and this discussion) is that wilderness is a social construction (rather than an object with fixed or enduring attributes), and that the core values which combine to form wilderness are constantly shifting, and subject to forces of change (see Cronon 1995; Gill 1999; Shields 1991; Williams 2002a). As such, this model lends strong support to work by wilderness researchers such as Alessa & Watson 2002; Schrepfer 2005; Watson et al. 2004, Williams 2000. It promotes the view that wilderness can only be fully understood through an examination of the inter-relationships between the physical environment, wilderness visitors, wilderness managers, and the broader societal context within which wilderness exists.

The remote, wild, stunningly beautiful, ‘natural’, dangerous and challenging physical environment provides the tangible features on which the wilderness construct is based. Visitors come to experience this wilderness environment with their own personal preconceptions about what wilderness is, or should be like. These views are socially constructed. They have developed in a particular social, political, geographical, ecological and historic context, and are heavily influenced by factors such as prior experience, the mass media, political decisions and the views of friends and family (Field & Wagar 1984). Further, the actual experiences are both influenced, and mediated, by managerial policies, strategies and decisions, which are in turn a reflection of public opinion and a complex political environment. Finally, a variety of macro forces (such as globalisation, technological developments and a growing awareness of environmental issues) are acting upon all three elements of this model and the individual components within them.

Another assumption of the model is that wilderness has important cultural value for those (New Zealanders) who visit it (Barr 2001; Bell 1996; Booth & Simmons 2000; Devlin 1995; Shultis 1997), and that these individuals want to protect wilderness, and the values they associate with it, from change – whether this means preventing new developments or access or protecting those which already exist. This cultural element of the model is illustrated by the outer circle surrounding the eight core wilderness values. The practices and activities undertaken by New Zealand wilderness users which serve to reinforce these values are also
represented by this circle. Further discussion of each of the three main sections of the model ('origins', 'dimensions' and 'forces of change') is provided next.

11.3.1 Origins of the New Zealand wilderness construct
The history and development of New Zealand wilderness was described in Chapter Two, using a variety of contemporary and historical literature. This included discussions about the unique version of wilderness which developed in New Zealand, and which reflected the country’s social, political, geographic and ecological situation. Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine presented data on the wilderness experience gathered from New Zealand wilderness users, through personal research diaries and in-depth interviews. Analysis of this data supported existing research on the origins of the New Zealand wilderness concept (see Bell 1996; N. Clark 2004; Lochhead 1994; Shultis 1997) and also revealed a number of ways in which wilderness recreation enables New Zealanders to practise and reinforce aspects of their identity. I grouped the ‘origins’ (or influencing factors) in the development of New Zealand wilderness into four broad categories, based on ideas contained in Hofstede’s model ‘The stabilising of cultural norms’ (Hofstede 2001, p. 12). These categories are: geography, ecology, history and politics. Each of these factors, and the contribution they have made to the social construction of New Zealand wilderness are described next.

Geography
New Zealand’s geography has had a significant influence on the existence (and interpretations) of its wilderness environment (See Devlin 1995; Shultis 1991). The remoteness of New Zealand’s land mass promotes the view that it is a wild and distant place (two key characteristics of wilderness), and is one of the main reasons why the country was only colonised by humans in the past 1000 years. As a result of this short history of human occupation, the country has a very low population density (around four million inhabitants), and a significant proportion of its land mass remains very wild114. New Zealand’s spectacular and varied scenery and landscapes have also played a major role in the construction of wilderness. The wild, rugged, mountainous and densely forested landscape has restricted the amount of human/urban development115, and the stunning scenery and diversity of geographical landforms have become the major draw card for international visitors (Ministry of Tourism 2009). Promotional images of New Zealand typically emphasise its wild, remote and highly natural environments and reinforce the view that New Zealand is the home of ‘true

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114 Wild in this sense means uninhabited by humans; a place where the natural environment predominates over urban/man-made structures and facilities such as buildings, roads and walking tracks.
115 Many of the earliest national parks in New Zealand were designated primarily because they were deemed unsuitable for productive use.
wilderness’ (Bell 1996). New Zealand’s physical geography has therefore been hugely influential in both the actual existence of wilderness environments, and in peoples’ perceptions of the country as a remote, untouched ‘wilderness’.

**Ecology**
Due to the fact that New Zealand’s land mass has been physically separate from the rest of the world for such a great length of time, a unique natural environment was able to develop, with an ecology which is distinctly different from anywhere else in the world. This biogeographical landscape is one of the key attributes of the country’s wilderness environment. Visitors to New Zealand wilderness are able to see, hear and smell flora and fauna that exist nowhere else in the world and to be part of the unique ecology. A number of respondents expressed pleasure at being able to explore this distinctly different environment, and the New Zealanders in this study displayed a great sense of pride at the fact that it was uniquely ‘theirs’. This is consistent with several New Zealand studies which state that a key factor in the development of the country’s wilderness was its unique ecology, and the national sense of pride associated with this (e.g. Bell 1996; Bell & Lyall 2002; N. Clark 2004; Lochhead 1994; Shultis 1997).

**History**
In discourses on the development of a nation’s identity, nature can substitute for the past. If the hunt for the root of New Zealand identity runs into problems with history, then turning to nature is another way of accounting for distinctiveness. (Bell 1996, p. 29)

The historical development of New Zealand wilderness (outlined in Chapter Two) highlights the role that the country’s history (as a European settler colony and a nation of pioneers) has had on contemporary interpretations of wilderness. A number of authors have emphasised the importance of New Zealand’s wilderness environment in the search for a unique national identity, following decolonisation from England in the mid 1900s (see, for example, Bell 1996; N. Clarke 2004; Lochhead 1994; Shultis 1997). New Zealand’s wild lands were seen as a way of distinguishing the country from ‘the mother land’, and other countries with significant amounts of cultural or human history. N. Clark (2004, p. 8) noted that:

> Our identity as New Zealanders remains closely tied to the natural landscape. You can see this in the enthusiasm we have for getting away from the cities and into the wilderness. In ‘getting away from it all’ we also remind ourselves what the country is really like – and who we really are.

Other authors have discussed the historical origins of the wilderness construction in countries like Canada and the United States, where wilderness is seen a means of national distinction,
and reflects a nostalgia for a past way of life associated with the early European settlers (see Cronon 1995; Grant 1998; Schrepfer 2005; Williams 2002a). Comments made by participants in the current study support this notion, and suggest that wilderness recreation in New Zealand is a way in which they are able to re-live the pioneering experiences of their ancestors, and to learn more about their country’s history. Many of the wilderness values described in Chapter Eight (and which form the centre of the model in Figure 11.1) represent historical ideals associated with the stereotypical New Zealand pioneer and settler society way of life. The cultural dimension of wilderness which was the focus of Chapter Ten also highlights the importance of New Zealand history in the development of the wilderness concept.

**Politics**

On both a national and an international scale, politics have also played a key role in the construction of New Zealand wilderness. To a large extent, much of what was discussed in the previous section is political as well as historical. The decision to utilise New Zealand’s natural environment as a means of national distinction was inherently political, and reflected a national desire to show the world what made New Zealand special and unique. The very process of decolonisation from England (the catalyst for this search for a national identity) was entirely political, and has thus played a huge role in creating the phenomenon of wilderness as it is known today (Shultis 1997). The rapid growth of nature protection organisations and recreation advocacy groups has also contributed to the development of the wilderness ideal (through its members, media coverage and government lobbying for wilderness protection issues), and typically such organisations have political roots, aims and objectives (Lochhead 1994). In 1990, Fiordland National Park was designated as a World Heritage Area under the World Heritage Convention because of its ‘superlative landscapes’, ‘vast wildernesses’, absence of human influence and natural beauty. This international political decision has undoubtedly increased international attention on the Park, and enhanced its status as an ‘untouched wilderness’.

The development of wilderness legislation and policy (including decisions about what should and should not happen in wilderness) is also political. The policies and plans described in Chapter Two have been created in a particular political environment, and therefore reflect the strategic goals and desires of the government at the time, as well as the views of the general public. Finally, the rapid growth of international tourism (identified by respondents as one of the major threats to wilderness in New Zealand) is largely the result of a political strategy to encourage international visitors to experience New Zealand’s ‘natural’ and spectacularly
beautiful wild lands. As discussed in Chapter Three, Tourism New Zealand promotes New Zealand’s wilderness environment to international tourists and thus reinforces particular ideas about New Zealand wilderness (for example, it’s beauty, ruggedness, remoteness and absence of people) (Cloke & Perkins 1998). International tourism (based around visits to New Zealand’s wild natural areas) has been occurring (albeit on a much smaller scale in earlier years) since the early 1800s, and has undoubtedly shaped the contemporary view of wilderness – both for overseas visitors and for New Zealanders.

The dominant construction of wilderness (which has developed as a result of these unique geographical, ecological, historical and political conditions) is the focus of the following section.

11.3.2 Wilderness in contemporary New Zealand society

One of the main objectives of this research was to identify the meanings and values that visitors attribute to New Zealand wilderness. The key wilderness values that have been identified in existing studies (including Higham 1996; Kearsley 1982, 1990, 1997; Shultis 1991 and Shultis & Kearsley 1989 in a New Zealand context) were outlined in Chapter Four. The core attributes of New Zealand wilderness identified by respondents in this study were presented in Chapter Eight, with a detailed description of their meaning in the context of the Fiordland case study. Each of these eight characteristics is represented by a segment of the large circle in the centre of Figure 11.1. They are: ‘challenge’, ‘solitude’, ‘self reliance’, ‘danger and risk’, ‘freedom and adventure’, ‘connecting with nature’, ‘earning the experience’ and ‘escape’. Most of these values have been identified in previous studies on wilderness motivations and benefits (e.g. Hammitt & Madden 1989; Kaplan & Talbot 1983; Watson et al. 2002). Research has shown, for instance, that people choose to visit wilderness because they want to escape and to have an adventure (Rossman & Ulehla 1977; Wohlwill 1983); because they want to experience solitude (Hammitt & Madden 1989; Westin 1967); or to connect with nature (Brown & Haas 1980; Shafer & Mietz 1969) and because they want to challenge themselves (Kellert 1998). Many of the benefits that participants in this study associated with wilderness (such as self-confidence, enhanced peace of mind and spiritual awareness) have also been identified in the literature (see Fredrickson 1998; Kaplan & Talbot 1983; Kellert 1998; Scherl 1989; Shin 1993; Williams, Haggard & Schreyer 1989). As noted in Chapter Four, however, one of the main limitations of the behavioural approach to wilderness research (on which most of these studies were based) was its overly descriptive nature and its inability to explore the meanings behind complex issues. One of the key contributions of the current study has thus been to extend these findings - to provide detailed
descriptions of what each of these values actually means to respondents in the context of New Zealand wilderness, and why they are important to them.

In addition, there are several elements of the model (Figure 11.1) that have not been frequently identified as core features of wilderness in existing studies. These are self-reliance, ‘earning the experience’ and the idea of becoming involved, or ‘immersed’ in the wilderness environment\textsuperscript{116}. Although some of the more recent socio-cultural wilderness research has touched on these ideas (see, for example, Watson \textit{et al.} 2002; Williams 2000, 2002a, 2002b), the values are not yet common features of contemporary wilderness literature. This is likely to be because they reflect explicitly socio-cultural dimensions of wilderness that previous cognitive behavioural approaches were not able to identify. It is only possible to develop an awareness of these dimensions by examining wilderness from a socio-cultural perspective (as this study has done), which explicitly recognises the role and importance of history and culture in the formation of ideas about (and values of) wilderness.

The concepts of ‘timelessness’ and ‘oneness’ (Borrie & Roggenbuck 1995, discussed in Chapter Four) may help to explain the importance of ‘becoming involved’ in the environment during a wilderness trip. It may also be possible to argue that the notion of ‘earning the experience’ is an element of wilderness which New Zealanders have developed as a way of protecting their cultural identity (i.e. a response to the perceived threat felt of external influences - Cuba & Hummon 1993; Eriksen 1993; Williams 2002a, 2002b). By expressing a desire that only the ‘worthy’ should be able to access wilderness, existing users may be able to limit the number of potential ‘new users’, and thereby reduce the chances of wilderness being changed. Another likely factor contributing to the identification of these ‘new’ social dimensions of wilderness is the use of qualitative methods in the present study, which enabled a much more thorough and detailed exploration of the different aspects of the wilderness phenomenon than has previously been possible in New Zealand.

These findings give support to the increasingly popular notion that wilderness is a social construction, and that it is a reflection of contemporary society’s views, beliefs, values and desires. In other words, wilderness represents very specific aspects of the society within which it is located. As noted by N. Clark (2004, p. 9):

\begin{quote}
The way the European settlers of New Zealand imagine nature is intimately bound up with the problem of belonging and the task of building ourselves a nation in which to feel at home. What we have made of ‘our’ nature, how we have given it a voice,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{116} As explained in Chapter Eight, this is an important feature of the wilderness value ‘connecting with nature’.

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framed it, represented it, is inseparable from our own desire to be ‘naturalised New Zealanders… our image of New Zealand ‘nature’ cannot be separated from the way we imagine ourselves to be a nation.

In the case of New Zealand (and perhaps other Western settler colonies – for example see Cronon 1995, Meeker 1984 and Schrepfer 2005 on the USA and Grant 1998 on the Canadian Arctic), one of the key features of wilderness is that it symbolises a past (and highly valued) way of life in which hard working pioneers lived simply and honestly, in a self sufficient manner, and in close connection with the natural environment. Good honest ‘toil’ was necessary in this environment if people wanted to ‘get ahead’ and achieve their goals of a better life for their family (Lochhead 1994). The characteristics of the stereotypical pioneer who was able to survive this harsh yet honest and egalitarian environment have become idealised (particularly amongst wilderness recreationists) in New Zealand society, and are kept alive through a variety of social practices and activities – one of them (as identified in this study) being wilderness recreation. These characteristics epitomise the good, honest, hardworking Kiwi who is willing to put in the necessary effort to reap the rewards he/she desires.

The socio-cultural importance of these dimensions of wilderness is illustrated in Figure 11.1 by the outer circle surrounding the core values. This element of the model shows that the eight core values which combine to form New Zealand wilderness are held together by culture and identity, and are reinforced by practices and activities such as wilderness recreation. This has been discussed in Chapter Ten. The importance of this cultural dimension of wilderness should not be underestimated, for this appears to be the ‘glue’ holding wilderness together, and creating the strong sense of attachment that respondents feel towards wilderness. It also underlies all of the concerns about the future of wilderness described in Chapter Nine. The final section of the model ‘forces of change’ is described in the following section.

11.3.3 Forces of change
A number of wilderness studies (discussed in Chapter Four) have identified factors which may have a detrimental impact on wilderness in contemporary Western society. These include increasing visitation, changes in visitor type, increasing human impact and technological developments (e.g. Borrie & Freimund 1998; Cole 1996; Fidell et al. 1992; Gabites 1996; Stankey 1973). Such influences are often regarded as threats because they have the potential to alter, and even destroy, existing wilderness meanings. Increasing human development can, for example, detract from the naturalness of wilderness, thereby reducing visitor opportunities to develop close contact with nature (Schuster 2004). Improvements in technology and
transport can facilitate the experience, reduce the need for skills and experience, and can introduce unwanted noise and visual impacts into the wilderness setting (Shultis 2001; Borrie 1998).

Respondents in this study were very aware of the possible ways in which New Zealand wilderness could be affected by external forces of change, and they identified several key threats to wilderness as they knew it. These threats are depicted by the four arrows pointing towards the centre circle from the right in Figure 11.1. Each of these factors (increasing visitation, increasing tourism, commercialisation and improvements in technology and transportation) was considered a major threat to wilderness because of its potential to alter traditional wilderness meanings or to cause significant changes to the wilderness setting.

**Increasing visitor use**
There is a paradox inherent in wilderness management in that wilderness visitation is typically a major management objective (as well as one of the main justifications for its continued protection), but that wilderness in its purist form should be free from all human influences – including visitors. Despite the fact that respondents wanted assurance that they would have continued access to wilderness, many were concerned about the biophysical and social impacts of increased use (i.e. ‘new’ people accessing the resource). As illustrated in Chapter Nine, these concerns centred around three main themes: increasing human impact (such as litter and introduced species), track or facility development (and the associated physical and social impacts), and the loss of traditional wilderness values. These findings are consistent with existing cognitive behavioural wilderness research about wilderness impacts which indicates that visitors to wilderness dislike anything which may alter the ‘naturalness’ of the setting (Cole 1996; Martin, McCool & Lucas 1989). They also support recent socio-cultural wilderness research (see Williams 2000, 2002a, 2002b) which concluded that more people accessing wilderness is likely to threaten the experiences and values of existing users, and to increase the potential for conflict (see also Bryan 2000; Hull 2000). For respondents in this study, increased visitation was perceived as a threat because of the direct impact it could have on the physical wilderness environment, and also because the act of introducing more people (and thus more interpretations and understandings of wilderness) into these areas could significantly affect wilderness as they know and love it. There was an underlying fear that ‘new’ visitors would destroy what was special about New Zealand wilderness, or would alter it to such an extent that existing users no longer wished to go there. This is a good example of what Nielsen et al. (1977) termed the ‘last settler syndrome’.
Increasing tourism
As discussed in Chapter Nine, many of the impacts associated with increased visitor use were attributed to ‘tourists’, rather than independent New Zealand wilderness users. Tourists were frequently described in a pejorative manner, and were blamed for impacts such as: destroying New Zealand’s back country culture; introducing pest plants and animals to wilderness; taking advantage of New Zealand taxpayers’ by ‘freeloading’ on public conservation lands; placing themselves and others at risk through their lack of experience in the outdoors; causing increasing health and safety concerns on conservation land (and the associated track and facility development in previously untouched areas), and much more. The resentment expressed by New Zealand participants towards tourists was, on occasions, extreme, and some even suggested that ‘foreigners’ should not be allowed access to New Zealand wilderness.

The antipathy which respondents displayed towards the commercial use of wilderness for tourism activities gives strong support to the New Zealand Conservation Authority decision to allow no more tourism in Fiordland wilderness areas (refer to Chapter Five). The rational for this decision was a belief that commercial groups do not meet the wilderness ideals of self sufficiency and self reliance embodied in New Zealand policy and legislation. Comments about this issue made by independent wilderness users in the current study indicate that the majority of them support this decision, and believe that commercial tourism is inappropriate and unnecessary in New Zealand wilderness. They are also consistent with research discussed in Chapter Four, which suggests that independent wilderness users in New Zealand dislike encountering commercially guided groups (see Cessford 1987; Fisher 1982; Harris 1983 and Wray et al. 2005).

These findings imply that existing users of wilderness are likely to harbour negative feelings towards anyone or anything which threatens to change or destabilise the meanings and values they associate with it. This idea is given strong support by authors such as Williams (2002a) and Eriksen (1993), whose research emphasises the importance of wild areas to cultural identity, and suggests that the potential for conflict increases significantly when these sources of identity appear threatened from the outside. As discussed in Chapter Ten, wilderness is an important aspect of cultural identity for the New Zealanders in this study. The strength of feeling they expressed against the introduction of anything which may threaten the meanings they associate with wilderness is therefore not surprising.

These findings are also consistent with Vail’s (2000) study of the conflict between local users and international tourists in Femundsmarka National Park, Norway (discussed in Chapter
Three). He found that the local Norwegians harboured a great deal of resentment towards foreign visitors who were believed to be ‘taking over’ their national park, and proposed that the conflict derived from socio-cultural differences between the two groups. He argued that (because of the particular social and cultural context within which Norwegian society has evolved) Norwegians have strong views about the natural environment and how people should behave within it. Foreign tourists, it was assumed, did not share the same understanding of nature and Norwegian national parks and consequently, locals viewed the presence of tourists as a threat to their cultural landscape and traditions.

Both Vail’s work and the current study highlight the cultural importance of wild areas to national identity of protected natural area users, and also indicate the kinds of reactions that locals are likely to have when ‘outsiders’ appear to threaten this identity. Traditional users of protected natural areas are likely to have strong views about who should use the resource, and how it should be used. These views are created and sustained in social interaction among members of recreational peer groups underpinned by deeply embedded cultural values, place meanings and myths about appropriate uses of land (Cloke & Perkins, 1998). Consistent with the meanings of wilderness arising from this socio-spatial interpretative framework local users are likely to characterise any ‘new’ visitors as ‘other’ and oppose their presence on that basis.

**Commercialisation**

Commercial activities were regarded by most respondents as the antithesis of wilderness, and there was a strong feeling that anything commercial would devalue, and potentially destroy, the traditional values they associated with these areas. Wilderness was seen to represent freedom, independence, personal growth and development, and a rejection of modern society; whereas commercialisation represented exactly the opposite of this. Commercialisation was seen as an almost unstoppable force, driven by the need for financial gain, and respondents feared that, if commercial activities were allowed in wilderness, then this drive for profit would eventually overshadow any attempts to protect wilderness for its social, cultural and ecological values. They gave examples of other areas of New Zealand conservation land which had ‘succumbed to the commercial dollar’, and lamented the fact that this had been allowed to occur.

As discussed in Chapter Nine, tourism was seen the biggest commercial threat to New Zealand wilderness. Respondents described in depth, and with great passion, the way in which commercial wilderness visits (and visitors) differed from their experiences, and explained how and why any increase in such activities would affect wilderness as they knew it. Again,
this supports the New Zealand Conservation Authority decision to allow no more commercial tourism in wilderness. These findings are also consistent with existing research which has explored the issue of commercialisation in wilderness (e.g. Freitag Ronaldson et al. 2003; Higham et al. 2000; Kearsley 1982; Shultis 1999; Wilson 1979; Wynn 2003). These studies have indicated that commercial developments are seen by many as ‘unacceptable’ in wilderness settings – even by non-users.

Although respondents’ views on this topic clearly reflected a desire to protect wilderness from commercial use for their individual benefit, there was also strong evidence to indicate that their dislike of commercial activities was rooted in a fear that the wilderness may one day be ‘sold off’ to overseas interests, thus destroying part of the New Zealand heritage. Again, this finding gives strong support to work by authors like Eriksen (1993; 1996) and Williams (2000, 2002a, 2002b), who argue that anything which is believed to threaten an individual’s sense of cultural identity is likely to cause conflict and tension.

*Improvements in technology and transport*

Technological developments are just one of a variety of global forces which are acting upon wilderness in contemporary society. As discussed in Chapter Nine, study respondents regarded technology (largely motorised transport, but also communication technologies and new equipment) as a major threat to wilderness values. Again this is consistent with existing wilderness literature (see, for example, Borrie 1998; Ewert & Shultis 1999; Fidell et al. 1992; Hull 2000; Schuster 2004; Shultis 2001). The attitudes expressed by Fiordland visitors about the use of new technologies in wilderness reflect ideas about wilderness embodied in the Romantic Movement (described in Chapter Two) and the New Zealand Wilderness Policy 1985. The Romantic discourse promotes the view of wilderness as a rejection of modern urban society and that which is associated with it. An important reason why many wilderness users view technology in a negative light is because it represents many of the things they are trying to escape from when they visit wilderness – such as cars, machinery, cell phones, emails and non-natural noise.

The deliberate actions taken by some study participants to avoid using new technologies demonstrate their commitment to the wilderness ideal, and also highlight the cultural and historic values associated with wilderness in New Zealand (i.e. nostalgia for a past way of life). However, as explained in Chapter Nine, there is a paradox inherent in the use of technology in wilderness. Despite the apparent aversion to technology in wilderness, almost all respondents in this study used some form of modern equipment to aid them in their
wilderness trip – whether it was clothing, travel gear, communication devices or motorised transport. The contradictory nature of these views has been highlighted by a number of authors (e.g. Havlick 2006; Kerasote 2004; Shultis 2001), and has been discussed in Chapters Four and Nine.

The majority of respondents in the current study wanted (as far as possible) to hold on to the values they associate with ‘traditional’ wilderness use – values such as travelling under one’s own steam, living simply and relying on one’s own skills and abilities to survive. They opposed any developments that they thought might threaten these values, but at the same time, they also wanted to protect and retain anything which currently enabled them to have the experiences they were used to. This is yet another example of Nielsen et al’s (1977) ‘last settler syndrome’. In the case of the current study, the existing wilderness users are the ‘first settlers’ who are striving to protect wilderness as it was when they first experienced it.

Any technological influences which have the potential to change existing wilderness meanings are likely to be interpreted as threats by ‘traditional users’. The challenge for managers will be to assess how much of a threat the various types of technologies pose to wilderness, and to restrict or allow their use accordingly.

11.4 Managerial implications

This exploration of New Zealand wilderness has provided important managerial information on wilderness use and users. These findings are briefly outlined in this section under the following two headings: ‘practical implications’ and ‘methodological implications’.

Practical implications for wilderness managers

As noted in Chapter One, this study began as applied research for the New Zealand Department of Conservation. It was initially intended to fulfil the management objective of gathering information about remote and wilderness use of Fiordland National Park. Quantifiable data about the wilderness users in this study and their trip characteristics was presented in Chapter Seven. It is also important to note the extent to which these findings support existing information contained in New Zealand wilderness policy and legislation.

The most comprehensive existing description of wilderness users (although based largely on anecdotal evidence) is contained in the Department of Conservation Visitor Strategy (DOC 1996), under the category ‘Remoteness Seekers’. Information about this visitor group was presented in Chapter Two (Table 2.3). Information about the wilderness setting and the
wilderness experience is provided in The Wilderness Policy (1985), and was also described in Chapter Two (Table 2.1). The Wilderness Policy is the key document to which all management plans and policies governing wilderness refer. Encouragingly, information contained in these documents appears to very accurately represent contemporary wilderness use and experiences in New Zealand. For example, as suggested in the Visitor Strategy, the wilderness users in this study were typically fit, experienced and predominantly male New Zealanders; their visits ranged from 3-7 days or longer, and the activities they were taking part in all required a high level of self-reliance. Further, as proposed in both documents, the wilderness participants involved in this research were typically seeking a remote and challenging experience in a highly natural setting, with few or no facilities, where they could experience solitude, isolation and prolonged contact with nature. In addition, as proposed in the strategy, everyone travelled ‘under their own steam’ during their wilderness visits.\(^\text{117}\)

While it is useful (and undoubtedly reassuring) for managers to have the information contained in their policy documents corroborated by scientific research, it is arguably more important for them to be aware of any elements that are not supported by study findings, or to learn of any new and useful management-related information. There were a number of findings which fell into these categories, and these are summarised in Table 11.1.\(^\text{118}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study finding</th>
<th>Relevance for managers &amp; questions raised</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>− Most wilderness users are between the ages of 20 and 50 years old. Wilderness is not suited to the young and inexperienced or the elderly. This is because wilderness requires significant skills and experience, and is physically very challenging</td>
<td>Wilderness users seem to be aware of the need to maximise their opportunities to visit wilderness while they are still physically and mentally able. This gives support to the management strategy of access by merit</td>
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<tr>
<td>− Most wilderness users travel in small groups for reasons of safety and practicality. A number of respondents in this study, however, were travelling alone</td>
<td>The number of people travelling alone in wilderness may raise questions about safety – particularly if the individuals are from overseas, and/or lack experience in the New Zealand back country. If groups of any great size did start to travel through wilderness, this may lead to conflict if they come into contact with other smaller groups, as small group travel is regarded as the norm in New Zealand wilderness</td>
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<tr>
<td>− Some wilderness users travel to wilderness in large groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>− A significant majority of respondents used motorised transport to access the start or finish of their trip</td>
<td>This could simply be a reflection of Fiordland’s long history of motorised transport, but may also be an indication that the demand for motorised trips is increasing. This may pose a threat to existing wilderness values</td>
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\(^\text{117}\) A sizable majority of respondents did use motorised transport to access the start and/or finish of their trips.  
\(^\text{118}\) As explained at the start of this chapter, it is my intention that the issues discussed in this section be reported in more detail in a publication specifically aimed at (New Zealand) conservation managers.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Study finding (contd.)</th>
<th>Relevance for managers &amp; questions raised</th>
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<tr>
<td>− Respondents often defined wilderness in relation to what it is not (i.e. it is not like the city, I will not see tourists or buildings or cars)</td>
<td>− This highlights the importance of wilderness as a contrast to modern society, and emphasises the need for managers to protect and maintain values such as naturalness and remoteness</td>
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<tr>
<td>− There is evidence of growing resentment amongst New Zealand wilderness users towards international tourists in wilderness because they are believed to be ‘taking over’ the wilderness and eroding traditional wilderness values</td>
<td>− Given the importance of tourism to the New Zealand economy, this could pose a significant management issue in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Conservation managers will need to make some tough decisions about the potential for the successful coexistence of international tourism and traditional recreation activities in protected natural areas in the future. ‘Soft’ management strategies such as ROS zoning and public education may not be enough to avoid the detrimental effects of a ‘cultural clash’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>− The dilemma for managers exists in their attempts to preserve the natural, cultural and historic values of wilderness whilst also meeting the demand (largely created by Tourism New Zealand) for international wilderness visitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>− Most wilderness users agree strongly with the philosophy of access by merit, and believe that access should be restricted to those who are fit and able enough and willing to put in the time and effort</td>
<td>− This raises ethical questions about the way in which access to wilderness should be managed – for example, should ‘access by merit’ remain the key strategy, or is this unfair and elitist? And is there a need to re-think how access to wilderness is managed/whether it should be limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Commercial tourism activities are typically regarded as inappropriate in wilderness because the values which underpin commercial activities run counter to the traditional philosophies of wilderness and detract from traditional wilderness values</td>
<td>− This issue needs to be taken into account when planning for tourism activities in the future, and raises the question of whether commercial tourism is a valid use of wilderness? If not, is it ok to prevent commercial tourism activities in wilderness on purely philosophical/moral grounds (for example, even if there are no physical signs of environmental deterioration)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Wilderness in New Zealand has important cultural and historic value</td>
<td>− This is significant for managers because it means that New Zealanders are likely to develop strong attachments to the wilderness resource for reasons which may not be apparent to overseas visitors. This may lead to conflict if appropriate management strategies are not developed to deal with the situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− The historic value of wilderness also raises the question of whether cultural and historic artefacts should be left in wilderness, or whether they should be removed in support of the ‘naturalness’ values of wilderness</td>
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An important management issue raised during the course of this research is the conflicting attitudes towards the growing tourist use of wilderness environments and the rights of New Zealanders to access these areas for ‘traditional’ wilderness activities. There is clearly a strong feeling amongst respondents in this study that increasing tourism is having a detrimental impact on the quality of the wilderness environment, and on traditional opportunities for wilderness recreation. As discussed in Chapter Three, this issue has surfaced
repeatedly since the late 1800s when George Bernard Shaw expressed concern about the impact of tourism growth on local New Zealand communities and the environment. Recent articles published on this issue in the popular press include Chamberlain 1992; Round 2006; Spearpoint 2007 and Turei 2008. Despite the fact that New Zealand is a relatively unpopulated country, the number of international tourists to the country continues to rise each year, with implications for wilderness and other protected natural areas – and potentially (as this thesis has shown) for the cultural identity of some New Zealanders.

Traditional users are likely to have much lower thresholds of change than foreign visitors (whose perceptions of wilderness are typically determined by their experiences of more heavily-used protected natural areas overseas) and who may also be unaware of the cultural aspect of wilderness recreation. Will it be possible to sustain any increase in wilderness tourism without serious social and environmental consequences? The answer to this is not known, but these findings indicate that there is already significant potential for conflict between New Zealanders and international wilderness tourists and suggest that the situation requires the close attention of protected natural area managers and outdoor recreation researchers to ensure that it does not irreversibly damage the wilderness resource. Given the importance of wilderness to the personal and national identity of some New Zealanders, managers would be well advised to think carefully before allowing any developments that may have the potential to impact on wilderness values in the future, and to take account of the socio-cultural meanings that local users attribute to the setting.

These findings also have practical implications for policy makers and managers in other government departments such as the New Zealand Ministry of Culture and Heritage, the Ministry of Social Development and Statistics New Zealand. This study has demonstrated that wilderness and wilderness recreation has high cultural significance for a particular sub-section of the New Zealand population, and that it contributes to a sense of individual and national identity for these individuals. Statistics New Zealand (with assistance from a number of other government agencies) is currently reviewing information needs for the monitoring and measurement of issues of culture and identity of the New Zealand population. The draft plan notes that ‘information on culture and identity is vital to our understanding of social cohesion and overall individual and societal wellbeing’ (Statistics New Zealand 2009b, p. 2) and states that social cohesion is needed to hold New Zealand together as a nation. The main information needs are described as:
• Subgroups New Zealanders belong to and/or identify with
• National identity, the common norms, values and characteristics associated with being a New Zealander
• Types of, and opportunities for participation in, cultural activities
• The contribution of that participation to individual and societal wellbeing

The findings from this study would certainly go some way to meeting these information needs, and would help to highlight some of the potential issues associated with cultural diversity in New Zealand recreation settings.

Methodological implications for wilderness managers

Despite evidence of managerial resistance to socio-cultural wilderness research (discussed in Chapter Four), this study has demonstrated that such an approach can be a very useful way of exploring the meanings and values associated with a particular phenomenon. Unlike earlier behavioural research which simply stated the motives for visiting wilderness or the benefits achieved from it; the combination of two qualitative methods used in this study revealed what participants valued about wilderness and why, and also facilitated an exploration of how these beliefs related to perceived threats to wilderness. An understanding of exactly why wilderness is meaningful to the people who visit it can help managers to predict and interpret their reactions to developments such as increasing visitation and improvements in technology and transport, and to plan proactively for the future. In addition, the diary method used in this study proved to be a cost-effective and successful way of gathering data from visitors in situations where on-site survey methods are not appropriate or possible. This method has significant potential for use within park management agencies, as long as the researchers are fully aware of the limitations of the method (see Chapter Six).

The primary explanation proposed for managerial resistance to socio-cultural approaches to wilderness is a fear that such research would undermine existing policy and legislation (which is necessarily based on fixed, measurable attributes). Based on the current study findings, and in support of Williams (2000, 2002a, 2002b), I argue that viewing wilderness as a social construction does not necessarily ‘deny the existence of a hard reality’ (ibid. 2000a, p. 78), but that it enables researchers and managers to understand that the meaning of that reality is constantly shifting, and is (re)produced through social interactions and practices. It also draws attention to the fact that the work of wilderness recreationists, wilderness researchers, managers and planners also creates, contests, and negotiates wilderness meanings. Although adopting such an approach may mean that some elements of wilderness policy and legislation eventually require slight modification, it will ensure that the policies continue to reflect the needs and desires of contemporary society. Some level of change is inevitable, because
wilderness is a social and cultural creation, and so it will always reflect in part the major trends and developments affecting broader Western society.

However, if such approaches are adopted, and changes to existing legislation or policy are proposed, it will be imperative that managers consult extensively with wilderness users when considering any such developments, for these are the people who are in part defined by, and who use and understand the true value of these areas. Any decisions they make would need to be based on robust social scientific research, and must not be driven by economic or political pressure from (increasingly powerful) industry or lobby groups. Wilderness in New Zealand is more than a recreational or ecological concept – it is part of the nation’s heritage. To lose this in exchange for relatively short-term commercial gains would be a tragedy.

To summarise its applied contribution, this research has provided some detailed and useful information for managers about wilderness use and wilderness users in New Zealand. It has also raised some important questions about what wilderness actually means to people who use it, and how it should be managed in the future to protect these values.

11.5 Academic significance

In addition to the theoretical and practical relevance of the study findings (discussed in Sections 11.3 and 11.4 respectively) this research also has much broader academic application. Through an exploration of the meanings and values attributed to wilderness in New Zealand, this study has contributed to our understanding of Western (and particularly New Zealand) society. The findings have shown how people develop attachments to particular places and/or concepts as a way of demonstrating and maintaining individual and national identity. The study has also illustrated how and why these people can become concerned (and how they may react) when the meanings and values they hold for these places or concepts appear to be threatened from the outside. Taking a socio-cultural approach to understanding wilderness helps to explain why my respondents have developed such strong attachments to wilderness as a place and as a concept, and why they have such a fear of external influences such as ‘foreigners’, tourism and commercialisation. These influences all have the potential to alter traditional meanings of wilderness, and thus pose a real threat to the individual and cultural identity of New Zealand wilderness enthusiasts.

Although the focus of this study was wilderness, the findings demonstrated that wilderness is simply a manifestation of a much bigger and much more important social process - a way in
which a particular sub-set of the New Zealand population can demonstrate and practise their values and ideas about what it means to ‘be a Kiwi’. In other words, wilderness is one of the many ways in which specific elements of New Zealand culture and identity are produced and reproduced. Through their practices and activities (not only by visiting wilderness, but also writing about wilderness, reading about wilderness, sharing stories about wilderness, and actively being involved in the ongoing movement to protect and preserve wilderness) New Zealand wilderness users are able to demonstrate what being a Kiwi means to them. In doing so, they reinforce the traditional meanings of wilderness.

11.6 Future research ideas

This study has shown that New Zealand wilderness is a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon which is rooted in the country’s unique geographical, ecological, historical and political situation. The findings have also provided a platform on which future wilderness and protected area research can be based. Some of the avenues for future research which have arisen from this study are identified below:

**The cultural importance of New Zealand’s wild lands to non-users of the wilderness resource**

Given the seeming cultural and historic importance of New Zealand’s wilderness resource to people who use it, it would be interesting to explore whether non-users feel the same way. Is the mere existence of wilderness enough for New Zealanders to feel strongly about protecting it? And if they feel the same attachment to wilderness, do they share study respondents’ views on potential threats to wilderness such as international and commercial tourism? Although several New Zealand studies have explored the topic of wilderness perceptions amongst the general public (e.g. Higham 1996; Kearsley 1990, 1997 and Kliskey & Kearsley 1993), so far none have focused on its cultural value.

**International visitors’ experiences of New Zealand wilderness**

Higham’s 1998 study found that ‘most international visitors to New Zealand seek to experience wilderness in relatively safe and humanised environments’. It would be interesting to follow-up on some of the comments made about international wilderness tourists in this study, and to try to assess the validity of some of the claims about their lack of experience and knowledge about the New Zealand back country. Is this just a stereotype, or are there sufficient grounds for making such sweeping generalisations about ‘foreigners’? Are most international visitors motivated by very different goals to New Zealanders when they visit wilderness, and do cultural differences and understandings of the back country affect the way
they approach wilderness? Are they aware of the potential impacts they are having on the resource and on other users? Do they have the potential to change the nature of wilderness?

**Tourist experiences in New Zealand wilderness**
Are commercial wilderness experiences really much different to independent experiences? Are the people who choose to undertake commercial wilderness tourism different to independent users, or is there a significant crossover? What motivates individuals to undertake commercial wilderness tourism? What are their perceived impacts on independent users? Although some of these questions were partly addressed through consultation with tour operators in this study, it was not possible to explore the issue in sufficient depth, or to speak directly to the clients.

**How to minimise conflict when the roots are socio-cultural or related to national identity**
There is definitely potential for more in depth research into recreational conflict which appears to have social or cultural roots – for example conflict between New Zealanders and overseas visitors. The origins and nature of this conflict would be fascinating to explore in more detail, and this type of research may soon become a necessity if the New Zealand government wish to uphold the image of their country as a friendly, welcoming ‘home’ for international tourists.

**11.7 Concluding remarks**

Our wild lands are not just a tourist resource. They are our place first, and fundamental to who we are. For many of us they are a major part of our identity, and their practical and spiritual significance influences our lives, our values, our interests and our culture. (Spearpoint 2007, p. 33)

As New Zealand society becomes increasingly urbanised and more culturally diverse, many of the traditional practices and activities which characterised the early rural, pioneering way of life are disappearing. Wilderness recreation is a prime example of a practice which may be under threat from such developments. While social changes such as urbanisation, globalisation, increasing consumerism and growing international tourism are being embraced by much of society, there are particular sub-groups of the population (for example, wilderness users) who fear that crucial elements of their New Zealand identity are gradually being eroded, and may eventually be lost forever.

One way of protecting and maintaining social cohesion within a society is to encourage members of that society to practise activities which enable them to express their cultural
identity. Wilderness recreation is one such practice which appears to have significant cultural meaning for sectors of the New Zealand population. Current wilderness policy and legislation in New Zealand was developed to reflect the needs and desires of this particular cultural group (wilderness users and wilderness enthusiasts), and aims to protect and maintain the values they associate with it.

The global forces of change outlined above are, however, trends which are expected to continue in New Zealand and other Western societies, and eventually this is likely to alter the way in which wilderness is conceptualised, valued and used. (For example, by increasing the demand for commercial operators and motorised transport, decreasing the need for self reliance, and increasing the potential for encounters with other visitors). The probable outcome of this situation is conflict, and increasing resentment amongst traditional wilderness users towards ‘new’ visitors to these areas who threaten to destabilise existing meanings. This is a situation which policy makers and wilderness managers would be well advised to avoid if possible.

The extent to which the views of a small sub-group of the New Zealand recreation population will continue to be the driving force for New Zealand wilderness policy will depend on the economic and political pressure placed on wilderness managers by powerful lobby groups such as the tourism industry and recreation organisations seeking improved access. Traditional users are unlikely to accept that wilderness policies should be altered to reflect the changing needs of society, and will expect managers to protect and maintain the ‘purist’ wilderness ethic they believe in. This places managers in a particularly difficult position. Their challenge will be to continue to protect and maintain New Zealand’s unique wilderness heritage, whilst also maximising the benefits to be gained from increasing diversity amongst New Zealand recreationists.
References


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Personal Communication References


Appendix 1: Copy of ‘wilderness diary’

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Wilderness Trip Diary

All participants who return completed trip diaries will be put into a draw to win a Fairydown sleeping bag
Why are we doing this research?

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our research project. Through these wilderness diaries, The Department of Conservation hopes to gather important information about remote and wilderness parts of Fiordland and the people who use them. This will help to focus future management and research on areas and issues of concern, as well as providing an invaluable insight into the views of this user group.

Remote and wilderness areas are managed as natural landscapes with few, if any facilities and little or no evidence of human modification. They appeal to well prepared visitors who want to experience isolation from sights and sounds of human activity and a closeness to nature. They’re places where you can experience a sense of adventure, discovery, solitude and freedom. The Department would like to find out what characterises a Fiordland wilderness experience. Why do people choose to visit these areas, and is the experience meeting their expectations? Feedback from people like you is crucial to providing information on what is happening out there.

What do I have to do?

Please use this diary to record your experience in Fiordland this summer. For each day of your trip, write down what you did, and details of anything important that happened during the day. Try to be specific about where you went (i.e. landmarks, grid references, GPS). Record what you saw and heard, and how you felt at different times during the day. Was there anything you particularly enjoyed or disliked about your day? Were you annoyed or disappointed about anything? Did you see or experience anything unique or surprising? Did you encounter/overcome any personal challenges during the day? Please write clearly in ENGLISH and be open and honest about what you say.

This diary is in three parts:
- An introductory section about you and your trip, to complete before you start;
- The trip diary – 2 pages per day to record your experiences during your trip;
- A ‘final impressions’ section to complete at the end of your trip.

Please be aware that:
- Information used in the final report will remain anonymous and participants will not be identified without their consent;
- You may be contacted after your trip and asked to take part in a follow-up interview. If you are happy to be contacted, please indicate this on page 31 of the diary and provide your contact details;
- Findings from this research may be published in Wilderness magazine and academic journals. Information from part 1 (demographics and trip details) may be shared with a third party for research purposes.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the project, please contact us by email at fnpsurvey@doc.govt.nz.

Please be advised that all information held by the Department of Conservation is subject to the provisions of the Official Information Act (1982) and the Privacy Act (1993).
Photography Use Consent Form

Photographs may help you to describe your experience and to illustrate any specific events or encounters on your trip. You can send your prints or negatives to us in the FREEPOST envelope with your diary, or email digital photos to fnpsurvey@doc.govt.nz. Please label each photo with your name, the date, location, and a brief description. All original prints/negatives will be returned once scanned, and any photographs used in the report will be acknowledged.

If you are sending photos with your diary and are happy for them to be included in the final report please sign the form below.

I agree to allow my photographs to be used by the Department of Conservation in the “Wilderness Trip Diary” research project:

Name (Please Print): _____________________________________________________

Date: _____________________________________________________

Signature: _____________________________________________________
Information about you and your trip

Please answer the following questions before you start your trip.

- **Age**
  - [ ] < 19 years
  - [ ] 20-29
  - [ ] 30-39
  - [ ] 40-49
  - [ ] 50-59
  - [ ] 60+ years

- **Gender**
  - [ ] Male
  - [ ] Female

- **Nationality**
  _______________________

- **If New Zealander, where do you live?**
  - [ ] Southland
  - [ ] Other South Island
  - [ ] North Island

- Including yourself, how many people are in your group? _______

- Which of the following best describes your group? (Please tick only ONE box)
  - [ ] Guided/commercial group
  - [ ] Independent
  - [ ] Club or organisation
  - [ ] Other (please specify):______

- How many similar wilderness trips (anywhere in the world) have you been on in the past 12 months? (Tick ONE box)
  - None
  - 1 - 2
  - 3 - 5
  - 6 - 10
  - More than 10
  - [ ]
  - [ ]
  - [ ]
  - [ ]
  - [ ]
1. Please draw a line on the map (------------------------) to show where you will go during your wilderness trip. Use crosses (x) to indicate where you will start and finish:
2. How will you get to the **start** of your trip in Fiordland National Park? (Tick only **ONE** box)

   - On foot  
   - By Aircraft  
   - By water taxi  
   - Other (please specify) __________

3. How will you **leave** Fiordland National Park at the **end** of your trip? (Tick only **ONE** box)

   - On foot  
   - By Aircraft  
   - By water taxi  
   - Other (please specify) __________

4. How many nights are you spending in Fiordland National Park on this trip? ______

5. Where will you be staying?

   - In huts  
   - Camping  
   - Hunter Camp  
   - Other (please specify) __________

6. Why did you choose to visit this area of Fiordland National Park?

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

7. What will be your **main** activities on this trip?

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

8. **Briefly** describe what you **expect** from your wilderness experience (i.e. how do you imagine it will be). Think about what you might see and hear (or what you might not see and hear), how many people you will meet, what challenges you may face, and how you hope to benefit from your trip.

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
Trip Diary
This section is for you to describe your Fiordland wilderness experience. Please write clearly, in ENGLISH, and record what happens each day of your trip. Write about where you go, what you see and hear, how different events make you feel, and any other things that are important to you during your wilderness experience.

Remember to record both positive and negative experiences and to take photographs if you think they may help you to describe your trip. If you need more space, feel free to write on the back of the pages.

Important: At the end of your trip, please complete the ‘final impressions’ section on pages 28-32, and provide your contact details if you wish to be put into the draw to win a Fairydown sleeping bag.

Day 1:
Where did you go today? (Use landmarks, grid references or GPS locations if possible)
What did you enjoy about today?
What did you dislike about today?
Did anything unexpected happen?
Were you annoyed or disappointed with anything?
Have you experienced anything new or unique today?
What strikes you most about Fiordland today?
How do you feel about your wilderness experience?

Think about (but do not limit yourself to) the following issues:
– Signs of human disturbance/visitor impacts
– Encounters/interactions with other groups
– Encounters with the sights/sounds and activities of humans
– Seeing or hearing motorised transport (vehicles, aeroplanes, helicopters, boats)
– Your sense of solitude/freedom

This format was repeated for ten days (with two pages per day).
Final Impressions

Please answer the following questions at the end of your trip.

1. What have been the most memorable parts of your Fiordland wilderness experience?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2. Which aspect of your trip did you find most rewarding?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

3. Was anything different to what you had expected? If yes, why was it different, and were you happy or disappointed with this?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
4. What do you feel you have gained/achieved from your experience?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

5. For you, what are the important characteristics that a wilderness experience should have?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

6. Was Fiordland a wilderness experience for you? If not, why not? And what do you think could be done to change this?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

7. Learning from your experiences on this trip, is there anything that you would do differently next time?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

8. Finally, would you visit this area again? And what advice would you give to anyone wanting to undertake the same trip?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Thank you for taking the time to complete this wilderness diary. We hope you enjoyed and benefited from your Fiordland wilderness trip. Your views are extremely important and provide invaluable information on these special areas.

Please put the journal and any photographs you wish to submit in the FREEPOST envelope provided and place it in your nearest post box or hand in to any Department of Conservation (DOC) visitor centre. No postage is required. If sending prints, please remember to provide your contact details so we can return them. If you wish to send digital images, please email them to fnpsurvey@doc.govt.nz

Feel free to contact us at the above email address if you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project.

Finally, if you would like to be put into the draw to win a Fairydown sleeping bag, please provide your contact details below, and indicate if you are happy to be contacted for a follow-up interview:

I would like to be put into the draw to win a Fairydown sleeping bag. My contact details are as follows:

Name (Please Print): _____________________________________________

Telephone number: _____________________________________________

Email address: ________________________________________________

Signed: _______________________________________________________

I am happy to be contacted for a follow-up interview  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

120 The Fairydown sleeping bag draw will take place on May 16th 2005 and the winner will be notified using the contact details provided above.

The judge’s decision is final. Participants who do not provided contact details will not be eligible to enter the draw.
Appendix 2: Retail outlet advertisement

Going into a remote part of Fiordland this summer? WE NEED YOUR HELP

√ Heading off-the-beaten track
√ Going for more than two days
√ Travelling under your own steam

We’re looking for people to record their experiences in remote and wilderness areas in Fiordland this summer to help DOC look after these special places.

If you are planning a trip to one of the GREEN areas on the map and are keen to be part of this important piece of research, please ask for an information pack at the front desk or email us at fnpsurvey@doc.govt.nz before 30th April 2005.
Appendix 3: Publicity outlets selected for Fiordland wilderness study

**Invercargill:**
- DOC reception
- Museum information centre
- Southern Adventure
- H & J’s Outdoor World
- Allan White Sports
- Sportsworld
- Stirling Sports
- Smiths City
- Ray Phillips mountain radio hire

**Te Anau:**
- DOC Visitor Centre
- Sportsworld,
- Bev’s tramping gear
- Stew’s place (mountain radio hire)
- Mobil Service Station: PLB hire
- Homer hut warden
- DOC Milford Road Warden
- Kepler Water Taxi

**Recreation organisations:**
- Southland Kayak Club
- Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand
- Otago University Tramping Club
- New Zealand Deer Stalkers Association
Appendix 4: Instructions for staff in retail outlets to follow

Department of Conservation Fiordland Wilderness Research Project 2005

Thank you for agreeing to help the Department of Conservation with this research project. The Department is hoping to gather important information about remote and wilderness parts of Fiordland and the people who use them. This will help to focus future management and research on areas and issues of concern, as well as providing an invaluable insight into the views of this user group.

People who are planning a trip to a remote part of Fiordland National Park this summer are being asked to keep a diary to record their experience. For each day of their trip, they will be asked to write down what they did, and details of anything important that happened during the day.

What do you have to do?

For visitors who wish to take part in the research project, please do the following:

- Double-check that they are going to one of the green areas on the map before 30th April 2005 and that they are going for more than two days;
- Hand them a diary pack and tell them that inside, it explains what they will be asked to do, and contains information about the research project;
- Ask them to complete the attached slip (planned route and destination etc.) and hand it back to you;
- Place the slip in the box with the diaries;
- Remind them that once they have finished their trip, the completed diary should be returned to DOC in the FREEPOST envelope provided;

Additional points

- If they have any further questions, they can contact us by email at fnpsurvey@doc.govt.nz;
- All participants who return completed trip diaries will be put into a draw to win a Fairydown sleeping bag;
- If you or any members of staff have any questions about the research, we're happy to answer them. Please contact either Michael Harbrow or Kerry Wray at the Invercargill DOC office on 03-214-4589.

Thank you very much for all your help!
## Appendix 5: Themes generated through diary coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main code (tree node)</th>
<th>Sub-themes (children)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Naturalness</strong></td>
<td>Wildlife, flora, fauna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scenery, landscapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of human influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natural quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Untouched, pristine nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impacts/influences on the experience</strong></td>
<td>Crowding/conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signs of human influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Displacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motorised transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceptions of likeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal development</strong></td>
<td>Spiritual/psychological development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical/physiological development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social aspects</strong></td>
<td>Camaraderie, friendship, team work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges of group travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stewardship, environmental interest</strong></td>
<td>The ‘feel’ of Fiordland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immensity/grandeur of surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self sufficiency, living off the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History, heritage, nostalgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weather, sandflies, mud etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remoteness, solitude, isolation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spiritual, magical moments</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Freedom, escape, exploring</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge, risk, adventure</strong></td>
<td>Challenging conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being prepared</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other issues</strong></td>
<td>Tracks and facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommendations for DOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6: Example of diary analysis

**Day 1**

Travelled from hanging valley shelter (Kepler Track) along ridge to West, camping at Tarns C43:786219. Enjoyed getting off track. Hard surface not good for feet. Lots of alpine flowers. A bit tired as heavy pack and not very fit. Saw one helicopter fly past over the TuTu Burn. Otherwise I have the place to myself. Good to get out of sight of the Kepler. The zig zag down to the bushline in hanging valley is very noticeable. White loo at HV shelter is also prominent. Disappointed with density of sandflies. The long hot spell had kept them down but they’ve emerged with the rain today and are very hungry. Fiordland strikes me as dry, but this rain should help. Is also hidden, with low cloud often on the ranges. Good to be out here away from all the signs of human clutter. Easy navigation and travel, things will get more interesting further along. Will sleep well tonight.

**Day 2**

Traversed the ridge in a NW direction. Route blocked by buttress at C43:765242, so descended into head of TuTu Burn and up the far side to a small basin just below the ridge where I’m camped (C43:753262). Enjoyed finding a new route when my planned one didn’t work. Head of TuTu Burn quite spectacular with steep headwall and lake with no outlet. Great campsite; millions of alpine flowers all around. Heard a few rock wrens along the way. Dislike the sandflies. In the distance I can just see the white dunny at Hanging Valley shelter about 8-10km away. White helicopter flew over ridge as I was traversing it. One per day isn’t too bad. Choppers quickly come and go. Enjoying the freedom of being able to go wherever I want, take my time and not worry about anything. Free from other people’s demands. Fiordland is putting on some nice weather for me. Rainy at times but very mild. Have often found deer tracks on my route. Find it interesting how all things that travel through this country converge along the best lines for travel. Change in geology means country from here is more bluffy and tricky to travel through. I enjoy the challenge of it. Knowing one’s limits, always able to pull back and figure out another way.
Appendix 7: Interview schedule (recreationists)

1. Respondent's history/background
   - Participation and interest in outdoor recreation activities
   - Previous wilderness trips anywhere other than in Fiordland
   - Level of experience in chosen activity (tramping, hunting, fishing etc.)

2. Respondent's experience with/knowledge of Fiordland
   - Number and type of previous visits to Fiordland
   - Activities undertaken
   - Level of knowledge/experience of Fiordland
   - Is there anything that makes Fiordland unique/distinguishes it from other national parks

3. The Fiordland wilderness trip
   - Summarise general trip information from diary (where, when, main activities, with who, how long etc.)
   - Most memorable parts of the trip, satisfactions and dissatisfactions
   - What do they value most about this trip to Fiordland?
   - Are these values unique to Fiordland?
   - Using diary, refer to specific events/sections that were important to them during their experience – key issues that need to be followed up

4. The wilderness experience
   - Personal definition/description of a wilderness experience
   - Was Fiordland a wilderness experience? (refer to diary question)
   - What they value most about this – detailed exploration of why they appreciate these things (relate this to other experiences such as everyday life, other outdoor recreation experiences – compare and contrast)

5. Potential negative impacts/influences on the wilderness experience
   - Do you feel that any of these wilderness values are under threat (and if so, from what?)
   - What are the key things that may detrimentally affect the wilderness experience in the future?
   - Have you altered your behaviour as a result of increasing use/impacts (OR, would you alter your behaviour if you felt that the experience was under threat?)
   - If appropriate, explore issues of crowding, conflict and displacement

6. Access to remote and wilderness areas
   - Who should have the right to visit remote and wilderness areas?
   - Should access be limited? If so, how should/could access be limited?
   - Whose role is it to manage access to/development of these areas?

7. Commercial tourism and the wilderness experience
   - Define/describe commercial tourism means to you
   - What are the benefits and costs of commercial tourism in national parks
   - Are you aware of any commercial tourism activities that take place in remote/wilderness areas?
   - Have you engaged in any forms of commercial tourism in remote and wilderness areas?
   - Do you think that any forms of commercial tourism are compatible with a wilderness experience?

121 Additional research themes/ideas which were not originally anticipated often arose during discussions with respondents. Where appropriate, the researcher followed these lines of enquiry. This is typical of exploratory social research.
• What would be the main effects of commercial tourism on the wilderness experience?
• Are some forms of commercial tourism more acceptable than others in remote/wilderness areas?
• What would be the worst forms of commercial tourism in such areas?
• What makes some activities more appropriate/worse than others? → Explore
• What types and levels of use may be appropriate in such areas?

8. The future of wilderness in New Zealand
• Is it important to protect wilderness, and if so, why?
• What (if any) are the biggest threats to this?
• What are possible mitigation strategies?
• How do you see the future of wilderness in New Zealand?
Appendix 8: Indicative interview themes (wilderness professionals)\textsuperscript{122}

- General information about the organisation and individual’s role within the organisation
- Organisation’s role in wilderness management/Fiordland national park
- Involvement in key issues related to wilderness/Fiordland national park
- Key characteristics of wilderness/ wilderness experiences
- Fiordland National Park – knowledge about/management of
- Management techniques/management issues
- Research issues
- Access issues
- Potential threats to NZ wilderness
- Commercial tourism and wilderness/concessions management in wilderness
- Future of wilderness in New Zealand

\textsuperscript{122} Each of the managerial interviews was very different, due to the fact that each individual had a very different job role. The issues listed above are very generic, and a separate schedule was drawn up for each interview.
Appendix 9: Interview schedule (tour operators)

General company background
- Type of tourism operation and size of company
- Number of years in operation
- Motto/aim of company
- Company’s views on conservation

Views on/values of Fiordland
- Tell me a bit about your impressions of Fiordland National Park
- What are the key characteristics/attributes of the Park?
- Is there anything that makes Fiordland unique/distinguishes it from other national parks?
- Why did your company choose to set up here?
- Why do you think visitors are drawn to Fiordland?
- What makes Fiordland National Park special?

The Fiordland tourist product
- Length of time operating in Fiordland
- Description of tourist products offered in remote areas of Fiordland
- How they promote the product
- Conditions of concession agreement
- Frequency, duration size of trips

Visitor type/clientele
- Why do people choose this kind of product? What are they looking for?
- Motivations, expectations, satisfactions
- Age, demographics, nationality etc.

The wilderness experience
- How the company defines a ‘wilderness experience’
- Importance of ‘wilderness experience’ for the success of this product
- Does the perception of ‘wilderness’ differ between clients? If so, how?
- Is the ‘wilderness’ nature of the Park changing? If so, in what way?
- Is the ‘wilderness experience’ under threat from anything?

Management issues
- How significant are the following issues in FNP, and what are the potential consequences?
  - Increasing numbers of international visitors
  - Social impacts (crowding, conflict and displacement)
  - Increasing commercialisation/pressure to develop the Park
  - Illegal use of cons. estate for commercial gain

Commercial tourism and the wilderness experience
- What are some of the benefits and costs associated with commercial tourism in remote and wilderness areas?
- Who has the right to access these areas?
- Have you experienced conflict between guided/commercial clients and independent clients?
- If so, what could be done to minimise the antagonism/conflict?
- What characteristics should a commercial tourism activity have in remote or wilderness areas?
- What kinds of activities are appropriate in such areas, and what kinds are not? What makes an activity appropriate?
- How much commercial use could (or should) remote and wilderness areas tolerate?

123 Additional research themes/ideas which were not originally anticipated often arose during discussions with respondents. Where appropriate, the researcher followed these lines of enquiry. This is typical of exploratory social research.
DOC and the concessions management process
- How well do you think that DOC manages commercial tourism in remote/wilderness areas?
- What could be done to improve the process/system

The future of wilderness in New Zealand
- How do you see the future of wilderness in FNP?
- What will be the biggest threats?
- How can these be managed?
Appendix 10: List of wilderness professionals interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martin Rodd</td>
<td>Department of Conservation Southland Conservancy</td>
<td>Community Relations Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Dowie</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concessions Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger McNaughton</td>
<td>Southland Conservation Board</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Crozier</td>
<td>New Zealand Conservation Authority</td>
<td>Member of Fiordland National Park Sub-Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Cessford</td>
<td>Department of Conservation, Research Development and Improvement</td>
<td>National Social Scientist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Sutton</td>
<td>Department of Conservation, Research Development and Improvement</td>
<td>National Recreation Planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Long</td>
<td>Department of Conservation, Head Office</td>
<td>Fiordland National Park Planning Supervisor and National Planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gavin Walker</td>
<td>Department of Conservation, Head Office</td>
<td>National Concessions Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 11: Themes generated through interview coding (recreationists)\(^{124}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Main code (tree nodes)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sub-themes (children)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elements of the experience</strong></td>
<td>Challenge, difficult conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Danger and risk</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self sufficiency and being prepared</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Timelessness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Escape</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comradeship and bonding</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NZ history, heritage and culture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual and magical moments</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connecting with nature</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adventure, exploration</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Physical environment</strong></td>
<td>Remoteness and isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Naturalness’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of human influence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenging environment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social setting</strong></td>
<td>Perceptions of likeness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solitude/few other people</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crowding and conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Displacement</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Managerial setting</strong></td>
<td>Track facilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hut facilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Management issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regulating visitor numbers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fiordland</strong></td>
<td>Place attachment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special or unique values</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Concerns about/ threats to wilderness</strong></td>
<td>Increasing visitor use of wilderness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increasing international visitors</td>
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<td>Motorised transport</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commercial tourism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Access issues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Removal of facilities/restricted access</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Environmental impacts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Displacement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commercialisation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desire to protect the experience</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Commercial tourism and wilderness</strong></td>
<td>Benefits of tourism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Changing traditional experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Incremental development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Associated impacts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Different people/experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Devalues/antithetical to wilderness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Philosophical reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worst forms of tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to manage tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourism not likely to be an issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{124}\) A similar process was undertaken with the managerial and tour operator interviews
Appendix 12: Example of recreationist interview analysis

**Can you explain to me what you value most about this kind of wilderness experience?**

Well a feeling of being remote is really important – so being away from road ends, away from aircraft flying over, away from everything to do with society really… A feeling of independence, so you making decisions, and the consequences of those decisions falling on you… I think that the duration is important as well, and I think that kind of goes with the fact that these trips take place in remote/wilderness areas. You tend to be there for at least a week. And it definitely takes a day or two to really get into the whole feeling of the wilderness experience – there’s just something a little bit different about an extended trip of at least 7-10 days.

**And is there anything in particular about the environment within which a wilderness trip should take place?**

Oh there should definitely be a lack of infrastructure – a lack of development. And there’s a little bit in Fiordland with the fishermen, but apart from that, it’s pretty minimal really… [pauses…] And I know there’s lots of people who don’t want to see any huts or anything on these kinds of trips, but personally, I think the odd hut here and there doesn’t really detract from the experience… But it’s nice if there are areas that don’t have tracks – just because tracks tend to bring more people who are looking for an ‘A to B to C’ type trip, and there’s much less opportunity to explore – like on the Great Walks, when you’re not supposed to deviate from them, you’re not supposed to camp anywhere apart from the designated campsites etcetera… But I mean you may need to go on a track for some part of a wilderness trip – and Nelson Lakes is a good example of that – you need to walk on a track to begin with, and then perhaps onto more of a route, but the key thing is that you still feel like you’re away from it all… I think that once you get 2 or 3 days from a road-end, you definitely feel like you’re away from it all – you know that there’s at least several days involved in getting out, and that’s a good feeling to have...

**And so what is it exactly about Fiordland that drew you, or that draws other people to these remote areas?**

Oh I think the terrain, the scenery, the wildness of the weather – the fact that you feel like you’re really on the corner of New Zealand, and there’s not a lot else out there. So you, location, environment – just the ruggedness of the terrain. It’s very wild. It’s not a place where you can afford to make mistakes, and we definitely felt that a lot. It was like ‘hey, we’re not in the Marlborough Sounds – this is Fiordland. What would we be thinking if we tried to take the risk here? And so in fact we were actually quite conservative in what we did each day, because it was like ‘hey, this is the bottom south west corner of New Zealand… we’re pretty remote down here…”
Appendix 13: Interview information sheet (recreationists)

Dear [INSERT NAME]

Thank you for agreeing to take part in an interview about wilderness experiences in Fiordland National Park. As stated in the information which you received from the Department of Conservation, this research forms part of my Doctoral Thesis at Lincoln University. It follows on from the DOC wilderness diary project which you took part in during 2005. The main aim of my research is to explore the characteristics, activities, motivations, perceptions and attitudes of visitors to remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland National Park, and to try to understand how this recreation experience may be affected by various factors such as commercial tourism.

All of the interviews will be conducted by me, and I would expect each interview to last around 1 hour (depending on how detailed your answers are). As per our telephone call/previous emails, I would like to meet with you at [TIME], on [DATE] at [LOCATION] to carry out the interview. I would like to tape record our conversation if that is ok with you, so that I can concentrate on what you are saying, rather than taking notes.

Findings from the research will be written up as part of my Doctoral Thesis in 2008 and hopefully in an academic journal. I also intend to present the results to students and staff at Lincoln University, the Ministry of Tourism and the Department of Conservation. Any presentations or reports will only use aggregated data so that participants will remain anonymous. If I quote any individual respondent, they will be given a pseudonym so that they cannot be identified. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.

Before we begin the interview, I will ask you to read and sign a consent form which indicates that you are happy to take part in the research. This is a requirement of gaining ethical approval from Lincoln University.

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions, or withdraw at any time. Should you decide, for whatever reason, that you do not wish me to use the information you provide, I will certainly respect that wish, up until the time when all interviews have been completed and final analysis of the results is underway (in about August 2007).

If you have any other questions about the project before the interview, please do not hesitate to contact me. (My contact details are given below):

I am a PhD student in the Environment, Society and Design Division at Lincoln University, PO Box 84, Lincoln, Canterbury, New Zealand. My email address is wrayk2@lincoln.ac.nz, my phone number at university is (03) 325-3820 and I can be reached by fax on (03) 325-3857.

My supervisors are Dr. Stephen Espiner (espines@lincoln.ac.nz) and Professor Harvey Perkins (perkins@lincoln.ac.nz) and they can be reached on the same phone and fax numbers. I will be contactable by cell phone whilst I am in [LOCATION]. My number is ……

Thank you for your time. I look forward to meeting you.

Yours Sincerely,

Kerry Wray
Appendix 14: Interview consent form (recreationists)

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis, I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and to the tape-recording of the interview. I also consent to publication and presentation of the results of the project with the understanding that my anonymity will be preserved.

I also understand that:
− I may at any time withdraw from the project, including the withdrawal of any information I have provided, up until the point when the final analysis of the results is underway in August 2007;
− I can ask for, and be given copies of the tape and/or transcript and make corrections as appropriate

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Signed: ________________________________ Date: _________________
Appendix 15: Wilderness professionals initial contact letter for interview

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am seeking your assistance with a study of commercial tourism and the wilderness experience in Fiordland National Park, which I am conducting as part of my PhD thesis at Lincoln University.

The main aim of my research is to explore the characteristics, activities, motivations and perceptions of visitors to remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland National Park, and to try to understand what people value about these areas. In addition, I would like to explore the theme of commercial tourism in these areas, and how this may affect the visitor experience.

As [insert organisation's name] plays an important role in the management of I would be very interested to talk to you about the organisation's/board’s role in planning for recreation and tourism in remote and wilderness areas of the Park.

Your assistance would involve being interviewed by me, at a venue and time of your choice in May 2007, for approximately 60 minutes (depending on how detailed your answers are).

Of course your participation in the research is entirely voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions, or withdraw at any time. Should you decide, for whatever reason, that you do not wish me to use the information you provide, I will certainly respect that wish, up until the time when all interviews have been completed and final analysis of the results is underway (in about August 2007). As a way of thanking participants for their help, I will be more than happy to make a summary of the results available once the project is completed.

Please contact me via email or telephone (contact details below) to let me know whether you are happy to take part in the research. If I do not hear from you within a week of you receiving this letter, I will phone you to see if you would be willing to help me, and to answer any questions you might have. If you are happy to help out, then I will arrange a time and a place to meet with you.

If you have any questions about the project in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I am a PhD student in the Environment, Society and Design Division at Lincoln University, PO Box 84, Lincoln, Canterbury, New Zealand. My email address is wrayk2@lincoln.ac.nz, my phone number at university is (03) 325-3820, and I can be reached by cell phone on 021 920 406.

My supervisors are Dr. Kay Booth (boothk@lincoln.ac.nz) and Dr. Stephen Espiner (espines@lincoln.ac.nz) and they can be reached on the same phone number should you wish to confirm my standing at the university.

Thank you for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

Kerry Wray
Information letter for managers (after agreeing to participate)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in an interview about [insert name of organisation]’s role in the management of remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland National Park.

The objective of this part of my research is to learn more about the way in which recreation and tourism activities are managed in remote and wilderness areas of the Park. To achieve this, I am interviewing a variety of key professionals who have an influential role in, or can provide an informed perspective on this issue.

As stated in my previous letter, all of the interviews will be conducted by me. They will take place wherever it is convenient for you (e.g. at your home, workplace or a local café) and at a time which suits you. I will be in touch with you in the next week to confirm the time and date of our meeting.

I would expect each interview to last between 30 minutes to 1 hour (depending on how detailed your answers are). I would like to tape record the interviews if that is ok with you, so that I can concentrate on what you are saying, rather than taking notes.

Findings from the research will be written up as part of my Doctoral thesis in 2008, and I also hope to publish the results in an academic journal. If you wish to remain anonymous, I will give you a pseudonym when reporting any information you give me, or if quoting your comments.

Before we begin the interview, I will ask you to read and sign a consent form which indicates that you are happy to take part in the research. This is a requirement of gaining ethical approval from Lincoln University.

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions, or withdraw at any time. Should you decide, for whatever reason, that you do not wish me to use the information you provide, I will certainly respect that wish, up until the time when all interviews have been completed and final analysis of the results is underway (in about August 2007).

If you have any other questions about the project before the interview, please do not hesitate to contact me. (My contact details are given below):

I am a Masters student in the Environment, Society and Design Division at Lincoln University, PO Box 84, Lincoln, Canterbury, New Zealand. My email address is wrayk2@lincoln.ac.nz, my phone number at university is (03) 325-3820 (ex 8901) and I can be reached by fax on (03) 325-3857. My supervisors are Professor Harvey Perkins (perkins@lincoln.ac.nz) and Dr. Stephen Espiner (espines@lincoln.ac.nz) and they can be reached on the same phone and fax numbers should you wish to confirm my standing at the university.

Thank you for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

Kerry Wray
Appendix 16: Tour operators initial contact letter for interview

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am seeking your assistance with a study of commercial tourism and the wilderness experience in Fiordland National Park, which I am conducting as part of my Doctoral thesis at Lincoln University.

The main aim of my research is to explore the characteristics, activities, motivations and perceptions of visitors to remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland National Park, and to try to understand what people value about these areas. In addition, I am exploring the theme of commercial tourism in these areas, and how this may affect the visitor experience.

As [insert company name] conducts tourism operations in remote areas of the Park, I would be very interested to talk to you about these ventures, and the kind of experience that they provide for visitors. Your contact details were obtained through your company website.

Your assistance would involve being interviewed by me, at a venue and time of your choice in June 2007, for approximately 1 hour (depending on how detailed your answers are).

Of course your participation in the research is entirely voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions, or withdraw at any time. Should you decide, for whatever reason, that you do not wish me to use the information you provide, I will certainly respect that wish, up until the time when all interviews have been completed and final analysis of the results is underway (in about July 2007). As a way of thanking participants for their help, I will be more than happy to make a summary of the results available once the project is completed.

Please contact me via email or telephone (contact details below) to let me know whether you are happy to take part in the research. If I do not hear from you within a few weeks of you receiving this letter, I will phone you to see if you would be willing to help me, and to answer any questions you might have. If you are happy to help out, then I will arrange a time and a place to meet with you.

If you have any questions about the project in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I am a PhD student in the Environment, Society and Design Division at Lincoln University, PO Box 84, Lincoln, Canterbury, New Zealand. My email address is wrayk2@lincoln.ac.nz, my phone number at university is (03) 325-3820. I will be working in [insert area] for the month of [insert month] and can be reached by cell phone on ………………

My supervisors are Professor Harvey Perkins (perkins@lincoln.ac.nz) and Dr. Stephen Espiner (espines@lincoln.ac.nz) and they can be reached on the same phone and fax numbers should you wish to confirm my standing at the university.

Thank you for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

Kerry Wray
Information letter for tour operators (after agreeing to participate)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in an interview about [insert company name]'s operations in remote areas of Fiordland National Park.

The objective of this part of my research is to gain an industry perspective on the issue of commercial tourism in remote and wilderness areas, and to explore the way in which commercial operations may influence the visitor experience. To achieve this, I am interviewing a variety of tourism operators who have concessions to operate in remote and wilderness areas of Fiordland National Park.

As stated in my previous letter, all of the interviews will be conducted by me. They will take place wherever it is convenient for you (e.g. at your home, workplace or a local café) and at a time which suits you. I will be in touch with you in the next week to confirm the time and date of our meeting.

I would expect each interview to last around 1 hour (depending on how detailed your answers are). I would like to tape record the interviews if that is ok with you, so that I can concentrate on what you are saying, rather than taking notes.

Findings from the research will be written up as part of my Doctoral thesis in 2008, and I also hope to publish the results in an academic journal. If you wish to remain anonymous, I will give you a pseudonym when reporting any information you give me, or if quoting your comments.

Before we begin the interview, I will ask you to read and sign a consent form which indicates that you are happy to take part in the research. This is a requirement of gaining ethical approval from Lincoln University.

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions, or withdraw at any time. Should you decide, for whatever reason, that you do not wish me to use the information you provide, I will certainly respect that wish, up until the time when all interviews have been completed and final analysis of the results is underway (in about September 2007).

If you have any other questions about the project before the interview, please do not hesitate to contact me. (My contact details are given below):

I am a PhD student in the Environment, Society and Design Division at Lincoln University, PO Box 84, Lincoln, Canterbury, New Zealand. My email address is wrayk2@lincoln.ac.nz, my phone number at university is (03) 325-3820 and I can be reached by fax on (03) 325-3857. My supervisors are Professor Harvey Perkins (perkins@lincoln.ac.nz) and Dr. Stephen Espiner (espines@lincoln.ac.nz) and they can be reached on the same phone and fax numbers should you wish to confirm my standing at the university.

Thank you for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

Kerry Wray
Appendix 17: Interview consent form (wilderness professionals and tour operators)

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis, I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and to the tape-recording of the interview. I also consent to publication and presentation of the results of the project.

I also understand that:

− I may at any time withdraw from the project, including the withdrawal of any information I have provided, up until the point when the final analysis of the results is underway in August 2007
− I can ask for, and be given copies of the tape and/or transcript and make corrections as appropriate
− That if I decide to make comments which are not in my professional capacity, the researcher will ensure that my anonymity is protected in the way that she reports the data.

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Signed: ____________________________    Date: ____________________