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Evaluating birding tourism markets in Nebraska

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Recommended citation


Correspondence should be directed to at joel.jorgensen@nebraska.gov; All photographs by Joel Jorgensen.


Introduction

In recent years, the number of non-consumptive (non-hunting, non-fishing) wildlife recreationists and their economic impact have increased in the United States. In 1996, surveys indicated there were more wildlife watchers than hunters and anglers combined (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of Commerce 1997). According to the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation commissioned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, there were over 48 million birdwatchers age 16 or older in the United States in 2006 (Carver 2009), which was approximately 21 percent of the U.S. population at the time of the survey (La Rouch 2003, Carver 2009). The same study estimated the annual economic impact of birdwatching in the United States at $82 billion. In Nebraska, 18% of the state’s population reportedly participated in birdwatching of some form (passive or intensive) in 2011 (Carver 2013). The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (U.S. Department of Interior et al. 2011) reported 143,000 individuals took trips specifically to view wild birds in Nebraska in 2011. The annual Sandhill Crane migration spectacle along the Platte River in central Nebraska is estimated to contribute $10.33 million to Nebraska’s economy every year (Edwards and Thompson 2009).

As the number of birdwatchers has grown and their ability to positively impact local economies recognized, government agencies have responded by supporting county tourism groups, municipalities and private landowners (hereafter, tourism entities) in their efforts to promote birdwatching opportunities, principally in rural areas. From November 2013 to January 2014, Nebraska state agencies awarded grants totaling more than $126,000 to improve or market birdwatching opportunities in the state (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission 2013, Nebraska Environmental Trust 2014, Kristal Stoner, pers. comm.). These awards were focused largely on information resources and marketing. Information resources include websites, blogs, banners and pamphlets that provide information about local birding sites and species that might be seen. Resources which identify specific birding sites along a defined route are collectively branded as “birding trails”. Examples of web resources include The Chicken Dance Trail (chickendancetrail.com), Nebraska Birding Trails (nebraskabirdingtrails.com) and Nebraska Metro Birding (nebraskametrobirding.com). The Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway Birding Trail is, as of this writing, under development. Marketing typically involves the purchase of advertisements in national or regional birdwatching magazines or magazines focused on the outdoors and outdoor recreation. These marketing products are intended to entice visitors with an interest in viewing birds to visit an area resulting in a local economic benefit.

Birdwatchers’ interest, expertise, knowledge, and investments of time and financial resources in the activity are varied. Studies (McFarlane 1994, La Rouch 2003, Carver 2009) indicate a continuum of birding interest, from passive backyard birdwatchers to individuals that devote substantial amounts of time and resources on their hobby; this latter group is often described by a singular term—birders. Studies (Kerlinger 1993, McFarlane 1994) show that birders are not a monolithic group. Rather, birding is a highly individualized activity and collectively consists of an assortment of different activities. Studies (Kellert 1985, McFarlane 1994, Cole and Scott 1999, Hvenegaard 2002, Scott and Thigpen 2003) have also shown a small proportion, 7-20%, of all self-identified birders are active or committed to the
Evaluating birding tourism markets in Nebraska

activity. This small subgroup takes trips specifically to go birding, spends more disposable income on the activity, has a higher level of commitment and is more skilled than other subgroups. Nuances in birding activity and discrepancies in numbers between passive birdwatchers and actively committed birders are why some authors provide caveats about expectations for demand and potential economic benefit of bird-related tourism (Scott and Callahan 2000, Scott and Thigpen 2003). For example, the Texas Agricultural Extensive Service (Scott and Callahan 2000) offered the following advice in a guidance document for those interested in starting a birding-based business:

“So it is important for landowners and communities to be realistic about the birdwatching market. Despite the fact that a large number of Americans say they birdwatch, only a small percentage of them is committed to the activity in a serious way.”

Such caveats and a review of the literature provide an impetus to evaluate birding tourism markets in Nebraska. Tourism entities working to develop and promote birding in Nebraska appear to base their efforts on two fundamental assumptions, 1) there is a demand for bird-related tourism opportunities and 2) investments in information resources and/or marketing will result in birdwatchers and birders visiting local venues to observe birds. Unfortunately, there is limited information available to tourism entities to evaluate these assumptions. Of the tourism studies evaluating the birder community (e.g., Cole and Scott 1999, McFarlane 1996, Cordell and Herbert 2002, Lee and Scott 2004, Carver 2009), we are aware of none focused specifically on the wants and needs of Nebraska birders.

In attempt to remedy this paucity of information, we conducted a survey of Nebraska’s birder community. Our principal objective was to evaluate what type(s) of bird-related tourism activities and amenities Nebraska’s birders would like to have available to them. Our hypothesis is Nebraska birders’ preferences for activities and amenities will vary according to 1) demographic attributes, 2) preferred birding habitats, and 3) birding styles. We evaluated the relative importance of the different information and marketing resources birders have available to them when planning a birding trip. Our results will be useful in improving the efforts of tourism entities and funding agencies to support the birding tourism market in Nebraska.

**METHODS**

Our study targeted only self-identified ‘active’ birders. We define birders as those individuals using and owning binoculars and a field guide and being able to identify over 40 bird species. We use the term birdwatcher for all other individuals that have an interest in birds. We developed an online questionnaire and asked active birders to take the survey either through a direct email request or a request placed on an internet discussion group focused on birds and birding in Nebraska (NEbirds; https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/NEBirds/info). For direct email requests, we obtained contact information for members of the Nebraska Ornithologists’ Union (Dan Leger, pers. comm.).

We provided slightly different questionnaires based on different solicitations to take the survey. For example, we did not include questions about membership or subscribership when the information was
known (e.g., we did not ask contacts identified as members of the Nebraska Ornithologists’ Union whether they are members of that organization).

All questionnaires included 90 questions about birders’ basic demographic characteristics (sex, age group, and home zip code), birding activity, birding affiliations, birding social preferences, and personal attitudes toward birding. For questions pertaining to personal preferences, respondents were asked to respond on a scale of one to five where 1 = strongly avoid, 2 = avoid, 3 = neutral, 4 = prefer, and 5 = strongly prefer. For questions pertaining to birders’ decision to take a birding trip, we grouped questions in the survey by 1) infrastructure, services, and environment, 2) availability of information, 3) birding opportunities, 4) personal constraints, and 5) other variables. We defined a birding trip at the beginning of the survey as any excursion five miles from a principal residence where the primary reason for the excursion is birding. We evaluated the information resources birders use in planning a birding trip. Respondents rated the importance of each variable on a scale of one to five, where 1 = not important and 5 = very important.

We present our results in basic summary format. For questions where respondents were asked to provide a relative preference on a scale of 1 to 5, we provide mean responses (± 1 standard error). We did not perform quantitative tests or analyses due to small sample sizes, rather the presentation of our results are qualitative. Respondents were provided the opportunity to provide comments to the question “Are there other specific services or products that you would recommend be provided to encourage you and other birders to take a specific birding trip?” Respondents were also provided the opportunity to provide any additional comments. Unedited comments in response to the first question are provided in Appendix B and to the second question are provided in Appendix C.

RESULTS

Direct email requests to take the survey were sent to 154 email addresses, overall, 109 individuals completed the survey; 61 completed the direct email survey, for a response rate of 39.6%, and 48 individuals completed the NEBirds survey. Not all individuals surveyed answered all questions. The number of responses for each question ranged from 98 to 109, with 85% of the questions being answered by all 109 individuals. We present all survey questions and results in Appendix A.

Birder demographics, birding activity, affiliations, social preferences, and listing habits

Demographics

A total of 41 females and 66 males completed the survey. The majority (88%, n = 93) of respondents were Nebraska residents (88%, n = 93). Non-residents included individuals from Iowa (7%, n = 7), South Dakota (1%, n = 1), Arkansas (1%, n = 1), Colorado (1%, n = 1), Wyoming (2%, n = 2), and Hawaii (1%, n = 1). The majority (53%, n = 58) of respondents were between the ages of 45 to 64 with most (71%, n = 77) over the age of 45, only 4% (n = 4) of respondents were under the age 25.
**Birding Activity**

The number of birding trips respondents reported taking in Nebraska during the previous twelve months varied. Two extreme responses, “1 to 5 trips” and “31+ trips” received 25% \( (n = 27) \) and 26% \( (n = 28) \) of the responses, respectively. The distribution of responses reflects the individualized level of commitment birders have toward birding. The distribution of responses to the question “how many birding trips have you taken outside of Nebraska and more than 50 miles from your residence during the past twelve months” was different; a slight majority \( (56\%, \ n = 61) \) of respondents reported taking 1 to 5 trips in response to this question.

In response to the question “when the principal reason for travel >50 miles from your residence is for work, how often do you go birding”, the majority \( (68\%, \ n = 74) \) were closely split between never \( (37\%, \ n = 40) \) and often \( (31\%, \ n = 34) \). The distribution of responses to this question may be due, in part, to the fact many respondents likely do not travel for work. The distribution of responses was different when the question addressed when travel was to visit family or friends or to engage in other recreation. In response to the latter two questions, a majority \( (52\%, \ n = 57) \), when travel was to visit family and friends, 56%, \( n = 61 \), when travel was to engage in other recreation) of respondents said they went birding often.

Most respondents reported taking a small number of birding trips requiring an overnight stay during the previous twelve months. More than a quarter of all respondents \( (28\%, \ n = 31) \) took no birding trips requiring an overnight stay and nearly half of all respondents \( (45\%, \ n = 49) \) reported taking 1 to 5 trips. Only 7% of all respondents took more than ten trips requiring an overnight stay. Similarly, most respondents reported participating in organized birding events such as Christmas Bird Counts, festivals or organized field trips during the previous twelve months. The largest proportion of responses \( (40\%, \ n = 44) \) reported participating in 1 to 3 organized events. Only 23\% \( (n = 25) \) of respondents participated in more than 6 organized birding events and 15\% \( (n = 16) \) of respondents participated in none.

**Birding affiliations and subscriptions**

A majority of respondents \( (75\%, \ n = 82) \) were known or reported being either a current \( (69\%, \ n = 75) \) or past member \( (6\%, \ n = 7) \) of the Nebraska Ornithologists’ Union. An overwhelming proportion of respondents \( (85\%, \ n = 93) \) reported subscribing to the internet discussion group NEbirds; a smaller proportion \( (37\%, \ n = 40) \) stated they regularly reported their bird sightings to NEbirds; and an even smaller proportion of respondents \( (31\%, \ n = 34) \) said they regularly report sightings to eBird (www.eBird.org).

Most respondents subscribed to a small number of periodicals about birds and birding. More than one-fifth \( (21\%, \ n = 23) \) of respondents subscribe to no periodicals; 20\% \( (n = 22) \) subscribe to one and 25\% \( (n = 27) \) subscribe to two. Smaller proportions subscribe to three periodicals \( (17\%, \ n = 19) \), four \( (6\%, \ n = 7) \) or five or more \( (12\%, \ n = 13) \). More respondents \( (37\%, \ n = 40) \) subscribed to NEBRASKALand than 1) Birding \( (28\%, \ n = 31) \), 2) a state bird journal other than the Nebraska Bird Review \( (23\%, \ n = 25) \), 3) Birdwatching \( (18\%, \ n = 20) \), 4) American Birds \( (16\%, \ n = 17) \), 5) Wildbird \( (6\%, \ n = 7) \), 6) Auk \( (6\%, \ n = 7) \), 7) Wilson Journal of Ornithology \( (4\%, \ n = 4) \) and 8) Condor \( (3\%, \ n = 3) \).
Birding social preferences

The social situations respondents most prefer when birding include going with one or a few birder friends (mean response = 4.2 ± 0.1; Table 1), alone (3.8 ± 0.1), as a participant in an organized group/event (3.7 ± 0.1), or with a spouse or partner (3.7 ± 0.1). Respondents’ mean responses approached neutral for birding with children (3.5 ± 0.1), birding as a mentor to a beginning birder (3.4 ± 0.1) or with a family member other than spouse, partner or children (3.3 ± 0.1). Birding as a field trip leader was the only social situation where the mean response indicated avoidance (2.8 ± 0.1).

Table 1. Mean birding social preferences (± standard error) among birders. Social preferences were based on the following: 1 = strongly avoid, 2 = avoid, 3 = neutral, 4 = prefer, and 5 = strongly prefer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIRDING SOCIAL PREFERENCE</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE (± 1SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birding with one or a few birder friends</td>
<td>4.2 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birding alone</td>
<td>3.8 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birding as a participant in an organized group/event</td>
<td>3.7 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birding with spouse of partner</td>
<td>3.7 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birding with children</td>
<td>3.5 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birding as a mentor to a beginning birder</td>
<td>3.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birding with family other than spouse, partner or children</td>
<td>3.3 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birding as a field trip leader</td>
<td>2.8 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Listing habits

A higher proportion of respondents (81%) maintain life lists than state lists (57%), county lists (40%), year lists (40%) and yard lists (55%).
Attitudes toward variables that may influence decisions to take a birding trip

Respondents rated from 1 to 5, with one being not important and five being very important, 37 factors in five categories: a) birding opportunities, b) availability of information, c) infrastructure, services, and environment, d) personal constraints and e) other variables. Across all variables, public land access (4.4 ± 0.1; Table 2), recent birding reports on NEbirds (4.0 ± 0.1, Table 3), add species to life list (3.9 ± 0.1; Table 4), opportunity to see a large number of species (3.9 ± 0.1; Table 4) and opportunity to see one-difficult-to-find species (3.9 ± 0.1; Table 4) registered the highest mean scores and were considered the most important factors influencing whether individuals took a birding trip.

Among variables in the infrastructure, services and environment category, public land access (4.4 ± 0.1), natural or scenic setting (4.0 ± 0.1), solitude (3.7 ± 0.1) and public land amenities (3.5 ± 0.1) were considered most important. Local non-birding attractions (2.0 ± 0.1), local services (2.8 ± 0.1), photography opportunities (2.9 ± 0.1) and wildlife viewing amenities (3.2 ± 0.1) were considered less important factors influencing whether individuals took a birding trip.

Table 2. Mean response values (± 1 standard error) among all respondents for how each variable associated with infrastructure, services and environment influenced whether they take a birding trip. Values were based on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not important and 5 being very important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, AND ENVIRONMENT</th>
<th>MEAN RESPONSE (± 1SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public land access</td>
<td>4.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural or scenic setting</td>
<td>4.0 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitude (encountering or sharing areas with very few people)</td>
<td>3.7 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public land amenities (e.g., camping sites, hiking trails)</td>
<td>3.5 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private land access</td>
<td>3.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife viewing amenities (e.g., blinds, observation towers)</td>
<td>3.2 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography opportunities</td>
<td>2.9 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local services (e.g., motel, restaurants, gas stations)</td>
<td>2.8 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local non-birding attraction (e.g., museum, winery)</td>
<td>2.0 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among variables in the availability of information category, recent birding reports on NEbirds (4.0 ± 0.1), websites with birding information about an area (3.8 ± 0.1), books, magazine articles or guides providing birding info about an area (3.4 ± 0.1) and access to knowledgeable local birding experts (3.2 ± 0.1) were considered the most important factors influencing whether individuals took a birding trip. Advertisements highlighting birding opportunities in an area (2.6 ± 0.1), information about local services (2.7 ± 0.1) and recent birding reports on eBird (2.9 ± 0.1) were considered less important factors influencing whether individuals took a birding trip.
Table 3. Mean response values (± 1 standard error) among all respondents for how each variable associated with availability of information influenced whether they take a birding trip. Values were based on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not important and 5 being very important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION</th>
<th>MEAN RESPONSE (± 1SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recent birding reports on NEbirds</td>
<td>4.0 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website with birding information about an area</td>
<td>3.8 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books, magazine articles or guides providing birding info about an area</td>
<td>3.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to knowledgeable local birding expert</td>
<td>3.2 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent birding reports on eBird</td>
<td>2.9 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about local services</td>
<td>2.7 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement highlighting birding opportunities in an area</td>
<td>2.6 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opportunities to see new, rare, many or difficult-to-find species were all important factors influencing whether individuals took a birding trip. Adding species to one’s life list (3.9 ± 0.1), the opportunity to see a large number of species (3.9 ± 0.1) and the opportunity to see one difficult-to-find species (3.9 ± 0.1) were considered most important in the categories and registered the same mean scores. A perceived likelihood of finding rare birds (3.8 ± 0.1), new birding experience (3.8 ± 0.1) and to see a staked-out rarity (3.7 ± 0.1) were also considered important. Adding species to year lists (2.5 ± 0.1), county lists (2.6 ± 0.1) and state lists (3.1 ± 0.2) and access to a skilled or knowledgeable local guide (3.3 ± 0.1) were considered less important factors influencing whether individuals took a birding trip.

Table 4. Mean response values (± 1 standard error) among all respondents for how each variable associated with birding opportunities influenced whether they take a birding trip. Values were based on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not important and 5 being very important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIRDING OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>MEAN RESPONSE (± 1SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Add species to your life list</td>
<td>3.9 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to see a large number of species</td>
<td>3.9 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to see one difficult-to-find species</td>
<td>3.9 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived high likelihood of finding rare birds</td>
<td>3.8 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A new birding experience (e.g., blind trip to view lekking grouse)</td>
<td>3.8 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To see a staked-out rarity</td>
<td>3.7 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to a skilled and knowledgeable local guide</td>
<td>3.3 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add species to your state list</td>
<td>3.1 ± 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add species to your county list</td>
<td>2.6 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add species to your year list</td>
<td>2.5 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among variables in the personal constraints category, driving distance greater than 500 miles (3.7 ± 0.1), family commitments (3.6 ± 0.1), driving distance between 251 and 499 miles (3.4 ± 0.1) and cost (3.4 ± 0.1) were most important factors influencing whether individuals took a birding trip. Other hobbies or interests that are more important (2.3 ± 0.1), driving distance less than 50 miles (2.4 ± 0.1), driving...
distance between 50 and 99 miles (2.6 ± 0.1) and trip requiring an overnight stay (2.6 ± 0.1) were considered less important factors influencing whether an individual took a birding trip.

Table 5. Mean response values (± 1 standard error) among all respondents for how each variable associated with personal constraints influenced whether they take a birding trip. Values were based on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not important and 5 being very important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONAL CONSTRAINTS</th>
<th>MEAN RESPONSE (± 1SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driving distance greater than 500 miles</td>
<td>3.7 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family commitments</td>
<td>3.6 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving distance between 251 and 499 miles</td>
<td>3.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>3.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work obligations</td>
<td>3.0 ± 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving distance between 100 and 250 miles</td>
<td>3.0 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip requiring overnight stay</td>
<td>2.6 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving distance between 50 and 99 miles</td>
<td>2.6 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving distance less than 50 miles</td>
<td>2.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other hobbies or interests that are more important</td>
<td>2.3 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional variables influencing whether an individual takes a birding trip

Among additional variables, unique viewing opportunities and experiences (4.3 ± 0.1; Table 6), website with detailed information about birding opportunities and the area (4.2 ± 0.1), access to privately-owned birding sites (3.9 ± 0.1) and local contact available to answer questions (3.7 ± 0.1) were considered most important. Competitive birding events with or without prizes were not important (both scored 2.3 ± 0.1) in influencing whether an individual takes a birding trip.

Table 6. Additional variables - mean values (± 1 standard error) among birders. Values were based on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being much less likely and 5 being much more likely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADDITIONAL VARIABLES</th>
<th>MEAN RESPONSE (± 1SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unique viewing opportunities or experiences</td>
<td>4.3 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website with detailed information about birding opportunities and the area</td>
<td>4.2 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to privately-owned birding sites</td>
<td>3.9 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local contact available to answer questions</td>
<td>3.7 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discounts on lodging or restaurants for birders</td>
<td>3.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive birding event (no prizes)</td>
<td>2.3 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive birding event (with prizes)</td>
<td>2.3 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attitudes toward variables that may influence decisions to go birding at a public site

Respondents indicated the opportunity to see certain species or diversity of birds (4.4 ± 0.1; Table 7) and the perceived likelihood to find rare birds (4.2 ± 0.1) were by far the most important factors influencing whether they decide to go birding at a public site. Wildlife watching amenities (3.6 ± 0.1), solitude (3.4 ± 0.1) and distance from home (3.3 ± 0.1) were less important. Accommodations (2.8 ± 0.1), entrance fee (2.4 ± 0.1) and other outdoor recreation opportunities (2.1 ± 0.1) were not important factors influencing whether birders decided to go birding at a public site.

Table 7. Mean response values (± 1 standard error) among all respondents for how important or not important each variable is in whether they choose to go birding at a public site (e.g., State Recreation Area, National Wildlife Refuge). Values were based on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not important and 5 being very important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIRDING AT A PUBLIC SITE</th>
<th>MEAN RESPONSE (± 1SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to see certain species or diversity of birds</td>
<td>4.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived likelihood to find rare birds</td>
<td>4.2 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife watching amenities (e.g., nature trails, visitor center)</td>
<td>3.6 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitude (encountering or sharing areas with very few people)</td>
<td>3.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance from home</td>
<td>3.3 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations (e.g., camping areas, lodging)</td>
<td>2.8 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance fee</td>
<td>2.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g., hunting, fishing)</td>
<td>2.1 ± 0.1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Importance of Information resources used to plan a birding trip

Regarding what information resources are important in planning birding trips, respondents indicated the most important was NEbirds (4.1 ± 0.1; Table 8), an atlas showing public areas (3.7 ± 0.1) and personal knowledge of the area (3.5 ± 0.1). Least important were blogs (1.9 ± 0.1), three existing regional Nebraska birding websites (2.3 ± 0.1) and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission website (2.3 ± 0.1).

Table 8. Mean response values (± 1 standard error) among all respondents regarding how important or not important each resource is in planning a birding trip. Values were based on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not important and 5 being very important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCES</th>
<th>MEAN RESPONSE (± 1SE)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEbirds</td>
<td>4.1 ± 0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlas showing public areas</td>
<td>3.7 ± 0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal knowledge of the area</td>
<td>3.5 ± 0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local expert/contact</td>
<td>3.3 ± 0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nebraska Ornithologists’ Union website</td>
<td>2.7 ± 0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>eBird</td>
<td>2.7 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska Game and Parks Commission website</td>
<td>2.3 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three existing birding websites in Nebraska</td>
<td>2.2 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog(s)</td>
<td>1.9 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

In recent years, government agencies in Nebraska have invested considerable resources to develop birding and birdwatching tourism markets in the state. This has apparently been based on perceptions of high-levels of participation in bird-related activities. Much of the investment has been directed toward information resources such as websites or marketing that includes advertisements in periodicals. It appears many of these investments have been executed with little evaluation of whether or not there was an unrealized demand for birding opportunities and whether or not information resources or marketing would connect birders to local opportunities.

Our results show that birders' time engaged in birding is varied, but the number of birding trips requiring a greater investment in time and resources most birders take are limited. Similar proportions, 25% and 26%, respectively, take very few (1 to 5) or many (31+) birding trips over a year. However, overwhelming majorities of birders, 73% and 74%, respectively, take five or fewer out-of-state birding trips which are at least fifty miles from their residence or any birding trips requiring an overnight stay. These results suggest that while a proportion of active birders take frequent birding trips, most birders do not have the capacity or inclination to take numerous extended trips or trips a substantial distance from their residence; personal constraints, such as driving distance, costs and family commitments, are important determinants in whether an individual takes a birding trip. Our survey was limited in scope and did not explore in detail how personal constraints affect birders' decision-making; however, it appears that birders are very selective choosing birding trips requiring increased investment in time and resources. These results suggest that even though a large number of people may engage in birding, the demand by in-state birders for additional extended birding trips is limited.

Our survey shows that 1) public land access, 2) rare, difficult-to-find, or large diversities of bird species birders perceive they may see, 3) unique viewing opportunities or experiences and 4) natural or scenic settings were the most important factors influencing whether an individual chose to take a birding trip. These results are consistent with other studies (McFarlane 1996, Kellert 1985, Moscardo and Saltzer 2004, Manfredo and Larson 1993, Cole and Scott 1999) which show increasingly specialized wildlife watchers are most interested in novel experiences. Birders, as opposed to birdwatchers, are less interested in general opportunities to view common birds, but seek opportunities to find and observe particular species, specifically rare or difficult-to-find species which are new to their life or other personal lists. The importance of opportunities to see specific birds also explains why recent reports on NEbirds was considered to be the most important information resource among those considered. NEbirds provides real-time information about specific bird sightings, including rare birds. Of all information resources, the highest proportion (85%) of respondents subscribed to NEbirds; more than a third of respondents (37%) report sighting to NEbirds.

Investments to promote birding in Nebraska have typically included either developing information resources and/or marketing. One of the principal marketing instruments is for tourism entities to purchase advertisements in magazines. McFarlane (1996) showed active birders are likely to subscribe to such publications and birdwatchers are much less likely to do so. Advertisements in birding magazines, therefore, target active birders, which is the group we targeted in our survey. Our results
indicate birders are also selective about which publications they subscribe as 66% of respondents subscribed to 2 or fewer bird-related publications and, of the specific periodicals considered in the survey, none were subscribed to by a majority of respondents. Our survey included a range of publications which included commercial magazines, but also scientific journals typically subscribed to by professional ornithologists. These results may reflect the individualized nature of birding and individual birders may subscribe to specialized publications about birds which reflect their specific interests. However, the largest proportion of individuals (37%) subscribed to a general natural history/outdoor magazine, NEBRASKAland, which may reflect birders general interest in that periodicals’ subject matter specifically focused on Nebraska. Overall, our results suggest tourism entities considering advertisement in a periodical, should evaluate the periodicals’ subscribership prior to investing resources to ensure messaging is directed at the specific intended audience.

A small number of tourism entities have invested resources in developing informational resources, such as websites. Curiously, when asked about websites in general, respondents considered “websites with information about birding” as important. However, when asked about the three existing birding websites in Nebraska respondents considered them unimportant. This discrepancy suggests information provided by existing websites is not of particular useful to Nebraska birders. We recognize that existing websites may be providing information intended for different audiences (e.g., out-of-state birders unfamiliar with the area) or market segments (e.g., birdwatchers) than interviewed here. However, this underscores the notion that tourism entities need to be keenly aware of the marketplace. Specifically, tourism entities need to develop information resources that provide information that their target audiences are seeking and which will influence their decisions to take a birding trip or improve experiences of a birding trip.

Our results suggest perceptions about demand in the birding tourism market in Nebraska should be reconsidered. Many of these perceptions may be fueled by information provided in the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (United State Department of the Interior et al. 2011) about wildlife watching and birding participation. However, local information is not easily reconciled with the national survey. For instance, membership in the Nebraska Ornithologists’ Union (NOU), the state’s principal birding organization, only numbers a couple hundred (Dan Leger, pers. comm.). Membership fees may dissuade some birders from joining the NOU, but Nebraska’s internet discussion group, NEbirds, is free to join and only boasts a little over one thousand subscribers (1,098 subscribers as of 28 January 2014).

Our survey showed novel birding experiences (opportunity to see rare or difficult-to-find birds) and public land access were among the most important variables in whether a birder took a birding trip. Since these important variables are not uniformly distributed across the state, tourism entities will have advantages and challenges in, first, attracting birders and, second, providing quality birding experiences. Understanding birders’ demands regarding specific birding opportunities is central in evaluating whether a site, area or region may attract birders who are very selective about which extended birding trips they decide to invest time and resources.
A number of personal constraints were considered important in whether an individual decided to take a birding trip. We assert that tourism entities need to also be aware of how constraints may affect the birding marketplace. Extended drives, costs, family commitments and work obligations constrain birders’ abilities to access certain birding opportunities. Tourism entities, particularly those long distances from population centers where higher numbers of birders are located, need to be aware of these personal constraints and possibly explore ways to remove barriers that dissuade birders from accessing birding opportunities.

Enhancing or developing additional birding amenities closer to population centers may be viewed more favorably by birders than promoting opportunities distances away from birders. Based on our survey, nearly a quarter of birders take frequent birding trips. Sites such as Fontenelle Forest and Branched Oak Lake State Recreation Area are two of the most frequently birded sites in the state based on the frequency of field trip reports on NEbirds and eBird.org. High use by birders is likely because both sites are close to population centers (Bellevue/Omaha and Lincoln, respectively) and provide birders potential novel birding experiences (e.g., opportunities to see rare birds).

Marketing entities should explore unconventional cost-free means to promote birding amenities rather than expensive traditional approaches. For example, NEbirds is non-commercial and allows anyone subscribed to the group to post messages about Nebraska birds and birding to all group members. The group is moderated so that messages are appropriate and discussions remain on topic. NEbirds is an under-utilized resource that is rarely, if ever, used by tourism entities, yet it is the most important information resources used by Nebraska birders. Tourism entities seeking to promote an area could do so by providing specific information about birds and birding about their area (e.g., field trip reports highlighting rare birds) or a specific event. However, tourism entities that use NEbirds in the future should provide information that will be of importance to list subscribers. Posting blatantly commercial and/or irrelevant information may cause birders to question the credibility of the tourism entity. Information provided in this report should assist tourism entities in identifying messaging which will be relevant to birders. Tourism entities can also consult with the NEbirds moderator regarding the appropriateness of potential message posts.

Personal surveys are an effective means to summarize general information about groups of people (Brunt 1997). Our personal survey focused on Nebraska birders is the first of its kind to evaluate birders and birding markets in Nebraska. As noted in the introduction, tourism entities desire to develop and promote birding in Nebraska appear to be based on two fundamental assumptions 1) there is a demand for bird-related tourism opportunities and 2) investments in information resources and marketing will encourage birdwatchers and birders to visit local venues to observe birds. We conclude that, broadly, these assumptions need to be reconsidered. Furthermore, this study shows there are areas of dissonance between what birders want and what tourism entities are providing. There is an urgent need for additional research defining market demand for recreational opportunities by all types of birder and birdwatching segments so future investments will efficiently and effectively generate desired outcomes.
Evaluating birding tourism markets in Nebraska

LITERATURE CITED


Evaluating birding tourism markets in Nebraska

**APPENDIX A.** Question and the distribution of responses in the survey.

**Question: Are you male or female?**

- Female: 38%
- Male: 62%

**Question: What is your age?**

- 16 to 24: 4%
- 25 to 44: 15%
- 45 to 64: 53%
- 65+: 28%

**Question: Where do you live?**

- Nebraska: 88%
- Iowa: 7%
- Wyoming: 2%
- South Dakota: 1%
- Colorado: 1%
- Arkansas: 1%
- Hawaii: 1%

**Birding activity**

We asked nine questions about birding activity. A summary of individual’s responses is below.

**Question: Approximately how many birding trips have you taken in Nebraska during the past 12 months?**

- 0: 1%
- 1 to 5: 25%
- 6 to 10: 17%
- 11 to 20: 19%
- 21 to 30: 12%
- 31+: 26%
**Evaluating birding tourism markets in Nebraska**

**Question:** Approximately how many birding trips have you taken outside of Nebraska and more than 50 miles from your residence during the past 12 months?

- 0 trips: 18%
- 1 to 5 trips: 56%
- 6 to 10 trips: 17%
- 11 to 20 trips: 3%
- 21 to 30 trips: 1%
- 31+ trips: 5%

**Question:** When the principal reason for travel >50 miles from your residence is traveling for work, how often do you go birding?

- Never: 37%
- Rarely: 7%
- Infrequently: 13%
- Sometimes: 13%
- Often: 31%

**Question:** When the principal reason for travel >50 miles from your residence is travel to visit family or friends, how often do you go birding?

- Never: 5%
- Rarely: 7%
- Infrequently: 9%
- Sometimes: 26%
- Often: 52%

**Question:** When the principal reason for travel >50 miles from your residence is travel to engage in other recreation, how often do you go birding?

- Never: 7%
- Rarely: 10%
- Infrequently: 9%
- Sometimes: 18%
- Often: 56%
Evaluating birding tourism markets in Nebraska

Question: Approximately how many birding trips requiring an overnight stay have you taken during the past 12 months?

- 0: 28%
- 1 to 5: 45%
- 6 to 10: 21%
- 10 to 15: 3%
- 16+: 4%

Question: Approximately how many organized birding events (e.g., Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs), festivals, organized field trip) have you participated in during the past 12 months?

- 0: 15%
- 1 to 3: 40%
- 4 to 6: 23%
- 7 to 9: 5%
- 10 to 15: 13%
- 16+: 5%

Birding affiliations

We asked six questions about birding affiliations with groups, websites and subscriptions to periodicals. A summary of individual’s responses is below.

Question: What statement represents your association with Nebraska Ornithologists' Union?

- I am a current member: 69%
- I am not a current member, but I have been a past member: 6%
- I have never been a member: 25%

Question: Do you subscribe to the internet discussion group NEbirds?

- No: 9%
- Yes: 85%
- NA: 6%
Question: Do you regularly report bird sightings to NEbirds?

- No: 63%
- Yes: 37%

Question: Do you regularly submit bird sightings to eBird?

- No: 69%
- Yes: 31%

Question: How many periodicals (professional, scientific, general interest) about birds or birding do you subscribe?

- 0: 21%
- 1: 20%
- 2: 25%
- 3: 17%
- 4: 6%
- 5+: 12%

Question: Do you subscribe to any of the following publications?

- Birding: 28%
- American Birds: 16%
- NEBRASKAland: 37%
- Wildbird: 6%
- Birdwatching: 18%
- Auk: 6%
- Wilson Journal of Ornithology: 4%
- Condor: 3%
- State journal other than NBR: 23%
**Birding social preferences**

We asked nine questions about birding preferences. A summary of responses is below and in table 1.

Question: Rate whether you strongly avoid, avoid, are neutral, prefer, or strongly prefer to go birding in each of the following social situations:

1. birding alone

   - Strongly Avoid: 0%
   - Avoid: 4%
   - Neutral: 39%
   - Prefer: 31%
   - Strongly Prefer: 26%
   - NA: 0%

2. with your spouse or partner

   - Strongly Avoid: 3%
   - Avoid: 7%
   - Neutral: 27%
   - Prefer: 21%
   - Strongly Prefer: 24%
   - NA: 18%

3. with your children

   - Strongly Avoid: 1%
   - Avoid: 2%
   - Neutral: 29%
   - Prefer: 16%
   - Strongly Prefer: 8%
   - NA: 44%
4. with family member(s) not including spouse, partner, or children

- Strongly Avoid: 3%
- Avoid: 6%
- Neutral: 38%
- Prefer: 23%
- Strongly Prefer: 6%
- NA: 24%

5. with a few birder friends.

- Strongly Avoid: 1%
- Avoid: 2%
- Neutral: 13%
- Prefer: 41%
- Strongly Prefer: 40%
- NA: 4%

6. as a mentor to a beginning birder.

- Strongly Avoid: 1%
- Avoid: 6%
- Neutral: 49%
- Prefer: 25%
- Strongly Prefer: 9%
- NA: 9%

7. as a field trip leader.

- Strongly Avoid: 6%
- Avoid: 23%
- Neutral: 43%
- Prefer: 16%
- Strongly Prefer: 2%
- NA: 11%
8. as a participant in an organized group/event.

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>Strongly Avoid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoid</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>Prefer</td>
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<td>Strongly Prefer</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<td>NA</td>
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Question: Which of the following types of personal bird lists do you actively maintain?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>81%</td>
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<td>State</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<td>County</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Yard</td>
<td>55%</td>
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**Attitudes**

We asked 62 questions about birders attitudes. A summary of responses is below and in tables 2 - 8.

Question: BIRDING OPPORTUNITIES - Rate from 1 to 5, with 1 being not important and 5 being very important, how each variable influences whether you take a birding trip to a specific area:

1. Add species to your life list

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<th>Rating</th>
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<td>NR</td>
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1 = not important, 5 = very important, NR = no response
2. Add species to your state list

3. Add species to your county list

4. Add species to your year list

5. To see a staked-out rarity
6. Perceived high likelihood of finding rare birds

7. Opportunity to see one difficult-to-find species

8. Opportunity to see a large number of species

9. A new birding experience
10. Access to a skilled and knowledgeable local guide

Question: AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION - Rate from 1 to 5, with 1 being not important and 5 being very important, how each variable influences whether you take a birding trip to a specific area:

1. Books, magazine articles or guides providing birding information about an area

2. Website with birding information about an area
3. Advertisement highlighting birding opportunities in an area

4. Information about local services

5. Access to knowledgeable local birding expert

6. Information resource: Recent birding reports on Nebirds
7. Recent birding reports on eBird

Question: infrastructure, services, and environment - Rate from 1 to 5, with 1 being not important and 5 being very important, how each variable influences whether you take a birding trip to a specific area:

1. Public land access

2. Private land access
3. Public land amenities (e.g., camping sites, hiking trails)

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4. Wildlife viewing amenities (e.g., blinds, observation towers)

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5. Natural or scenic setting

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6. Photography opportunities

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7. Solitude (encountering or sharing areas with very few people)

8. Local services (e.g., motel, restaurants, gas stations)

9. Local non-birding attraction (e.g., museum, winery)
Questions: PERSONAL CONSTRAINTS - Rate from 1 to 5, with 1 being not important and 5 being very important, how each variable influences whether you take a birding trip to a specific area:

1. Cost

2. Family commitments

3. Work obligations
4. Other hobbies or interests that are more important

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1 = not important, 5 = very important, NR = no response

5. Trip requiring overnight stay

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1 = not important, 5 = very important, NR = no response

6. Driving distance less than 50 miles

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1 = not important, 5 = very important, NR = no response

7. Driving distance between 50 and 99 miles

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1 = not important, 5 = very important, NR = no response
Evaluating birding tourism markets in Nebraska

8. Driving distance between 100 and 250 miles

9. Driving distance between 251 and 499 miles

10. Driving distance greater than 500 miles
Question: RESOURCES - Rate from 1 to 5, with 1 being not important and 5 being very important, how important the following resources are to you when planning a birding trip:

1. Nebirds

2. Nebraska Ornithologists' Union website

3. Atlas showing public areas
4. Existing Nebraska birding websites #1

1
2
3
4
5
NR

4. Existing Nebraska birding websites #2

1
2
3
4
5
NR

6. Personal knowledge of the area

1
2
3
4
5
NR

7. Existing Nebraska birding websites #3

1
2
3
4
5
NR

1 = not important, 5 = very important, NR = no response
8. Nebraska Game and Parks Commission website

- 1: 31%
- 2: 25%
- 3: 27%
- 4: 13%
- 5: 4%
- NR: 1%

1 = not important, 5 = very important, NR = no response

9. eBird.org

- 1: 28%
- 2: 20%
- 3: 18%
- 4: 13%
- 5: 17%
- NR: 3%

1 = not important, 5 = very important, NR = no response

10. Blog(s)

- 1: 50%
- 2: 20%
- 3: 22%
- 4: 3%
- 5: 3%
- NR: 2%

1 = not important, 5 = very important, NR = no response

11. Local expert/contact

- 1: 12%
- 2: 11%
- 3: 27%
- 4: 31%
- 5: 17%
- NR: 2%

1 = not important, 5 = very important, NR = no response
Question: BIRD SPECIES PRESENT - Rate from 1 to 5, with 1 being not important and 5 being very important, how important the following factors are in your decision to go birding at a public site (e.g., State Recreation Area, National wildlife Refuge):

1. Opportunity to see certain species or diversity of birds

2. Perceived likelihood to find rare birds

3. Accommodations (e.g, camping areas, lodging)
4. Wildlife watching amenities (e.g., nature trails, visitor center)

- 1 = not important, 5 = very important, NR = no response

- 6% for option 1
- 10% for option 2
- 21% for option 3
- 42% for option 4
- 17% for option 5

5. Entrance fee

- 29% for option 1
- 23% for option 2
- 28% for option 3
- 10% for option 4
- 6% for option 5

6. Distance from home

- 9% for option 1
- 13% for option 2
- 27% for option 3
- 37% for option 4
- 11% for option 5

7. Solitude (encountering or sharing areas with very few people)

- 5% for option 1
- 14% for option 2
- 29% for option 3
- 30% for option 4
- 17% for option 5

- 5% for option NR
8. Other outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g., hunting, fishing)

Question: Likelihood OF TAKING A BIRDING TRIP - Rate each of the following factors from 1 to 5, with 1 being much less likely and 5 being much more likely, as to whether, if provided or available, would change the likelihood that you would take a birding trip to an area:

1. Website with detailed information about birding opportunities and area information

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2. Discounts on lodging or restaurants for birders

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3. Local contact available to answer questions

1 = much less likely, 5 = much more likely, NR = no response

4. Access to privately-owned birding sites

1 = much less likely, 5 = much more likely, NR = no response

5. Unique viewing opportunities or experiences

1 = much less likely, 5 = much more likely, NR = no response

6. Competitive birding event (no prizes)

1 = much less likely, 5 = much more likely, NR = no response
7. Competitive birding event (with prizes)

1 = much less likely, 5 = much more likely, NR = no response
Appendix B. Responses to the question “Are there other specific services or products that you would recommend be provided to encourage you and other birders to take a specific birding trip?”

- Access to sewage ponds/lakes would be extremely beneficial to birders. Access doesn't have to mean have open access to sewage ponds. I realize there are liability issues. However, almost birders are looking for is a way to look over the sewage pond berms. With today's optics one doesn't have to get right next to the sewage pond. A raised mound or platform is all that is needed.
- Maps availability to posts/reports of what has been seen and where ability to post/report what I/we have seen and where
- Workshops on bird identification (e.g., dowitcher separation) and field techniques (e.g., use of playback equipment). Workshops on rules and regulations for birding certain areas or for certain species to minimize disturbance. Lectures on biology and ecology of birds and their habitats in that area.
- Specific site descriptions with specialty birds listed.
- Regularly scheduled field trips around the state would be nice. There have been several around the Lincoln area and I have attended a couple. Schedules don't always coincide, but that's to be expected.
- In thinking about taking a trip in Nebraska, that I have not been to before, having someone who's been there to know EXACTLY where a trail is, or a good birding spot is, etc, has been helpful. Now that I'm familiar with many birding sites in Nebraska, knowing which sites are getting the birds is important, which usually I get from checking out NEBirds or eBirds.
- Opportunities to see (and info about) other types of wildlife, especially insects (Lepidoptera and Odonata)
- For birding within the state, there seem to be enough resources to scope out any trip. Local bird clubs enhance the opportunities for knowledge and reporting.
- Maps. I like to see where the trails go, where the hotspots are, what the distances are, and in general the layout of the area. Some places don't have maps at all. Some have incorrect or outdated maps. Some only have maps on a sign, rather than on a handout. Also accurate trail signage. Even if we have a map, coming to a fork in the road without signs can be confusing.
- Access to interesting habitat is the critical thing.
- I wish the CRP maps had more accurate and up-to-date information on county roads.
- I think local bird lists are important. Sometimes you see a bird that you are unsure of as a "younger" birder and ask yourself "Am I seeing something that is not supposed to be here?" A list can help you determine the norm.
- I went to see cranes 5 times last spring. I would always hope to have at least one blind trip, out of five. I usually go to the Gibbon bridge viewing platform. I have loved guides in Trinidad, Tobago, Costa Rica, the Galapagos, and at birding festivals. I hate the NOU style car-follow-car trips and usually go with my own car load separately. Check lists are always helpful.
- Clear access and boundary information, including closure dates for hunting, maintenance, etc. One of the more difficult things about visiting a new area is finding out what areas are open to public access and when.
- Access to information in regard to local birds, local area, and information about occurrence.
- Better access/parking and trails at WMA's and WPA's
- Avid bicyclists like to include in birding trip for access
- Availability to borrow or rent scopes would be nice for those of us that currently don't have a scope.
Evaluating birding tourism markets in Nebraska

- Provide dynamic web content so visitors know what's happening: BirdTrax (a Google Gadget for viewing eBird data) can be used to show recent sightings, rare birds, and checklists for a specific eBird hotspot(s) or within a given radius of a location, such as a nature center or park. There are many wildlife photographers and birders on Flickr. Set up a Flickr group so visitors can share their own experiences.
- Perhaps more efforts among birders to carpool to see rare birds farther away.
- I get a lot of use out of the viewing platforms along the Central Platte (Alda and Gibbon exits) throughout the year. A couple more of those next to other bridges would be welcome. I owned land gives the impression of being managed solely for game species and hunters, with nongame species an afterthought at best. I would love to be convinced that this is not the case.
- The most influential factor for me as a birder is the opportunity to spot a rare bird or a great diversity of birds.
- Getting word out quickly on rare bird sightings.
Appendix C. Responses to the question “are there any other comments you would like to provide?”

- Given the diversity of ways birders are finding out about birding sites, you're probably going to have to have a plan involving multiple types of activities and multiple ways of communicating the information.
- Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this survey.
- Parts of this survey about visiting NE may be skewed because I am an out-of-state member of NOU.
- So much habitat has been lost in northeast Nebraska because of farming. Fields have been drained by tiling eliminating some marsh areas. Trees have been torn out so the big machines don't have to turn around, etc. Something needs to be done to slow this negative progress. Many species that were once common I now have to drive hurry plus miles to find. Can something be done to slow this trend?
- Nebraska is a great place to bird!
- My other thought would be the people. Having had a “mentor” starting out, and using NEbirds was probably my first intro to birding in Nebraska, along with eBird. The birding trails website I've used, have to have the latest Public Access Atlas, and my Game and Parks sticker. Meeting folks at hotspots who are birders, then getting introduced to NOU, and the amazing helpfulness of everyone who birds in this state.
- Thank you for the opportunity to take this survey.
- I attend NOU meetings twice a year. I also do considerable birding out of state and not infrequently out of country. My responses sometimes reflected my travel and are not strictly related to Nebraska.
- I am not at present an avid birder. I do enjoying seeing uncommon birds. I would like to learn more about birds and how to identify them but my work commitments restrict the amount of time I have available to pursue this interest. Maybe in a few years, when I retire. I can become a more active birder.
- I have not been physically able to bird this past year but have answered as if it were 2 years ago. Plan to be more active in 2015
- I am a photographer that enjoys taking photos of birds. I belong to the NOU but have not attended one of the meetings as of yet.
- Answers would have been different 15 years ago when I got around better!!!!
- Thanks for the opportunity to express some of my ideas about birding in Nebraska
- I really enjoy reading the yahoo NEbird group. It is the main reason I go to see different rare species if they are in the area.
- My participation of late has been greatly affected by the amount of time I'm spending caring for my elderly, health-impaired mother.
- Until my kids moved away, almost all of my travel was planned around birding. I have had wonderful experiences.
- 1. Better communication on field trip dates and information. (i.e., schedule of events and locations) 2. More ways to meet people my own age that like to bird. (23) 3. Facebook group with up to date info and trip opportunities listed.
- I am conservative when it comes to chasing birds because I don't like to consume gas unnecessarily. It's a green thing!
- Had moved to Colorado recently but still keep up on what's being seen in Nebraska, most interested in western Nebraska sightings.
• I usually visit locations based on them having interesting and fairly natural habitats, and I am observing the ecology as a whole. Birds are just one aspect of that ecology/habitat. Areas with an ecology particular to the region are more interesting and are preferred destinations.
• Time and family commitments are always the main limiting factors.
• Not that I can think of at the moment, but a very good survey.
• Great survey.
• Some NWR's namely Desoto Bend closes its lake during migration and has much of its areas closed for the birds so that hunters have greater success in the fall hunting seasons. My wish would be to have "birding" seasons that allow birders greater access as they do hunters.
• I was confused by the "distance to drive"...I rated them all important - but for different reasons - close drive - very important, but long distance - very important factor -since I wouldn't drive 500 miles...
• One of Nebraska's weaknesses as a birding destination is that so much birding has to be done from the road because almost all the land is private. This makes public land with good habitat a precious commodity; it is doomed to always be scarce, but sometimes it seems like it is even more rare than it has to be. State-owned land gives the impression of being managed solely for game species and hunters, with nongame.
• I very much appreciate NEBirds reporting ... I found it much better than the online birder presence at other locations I've lived in (Texas, East Coast, Wisconsin). They do a great job of accommodating the entire spread of birders (novice to expert) and the tone is normally helpful and encouraging. (A few years ago that wasn't always the case).