The Value of Urban Parklands: A Park User Study of the Baldwin Hills

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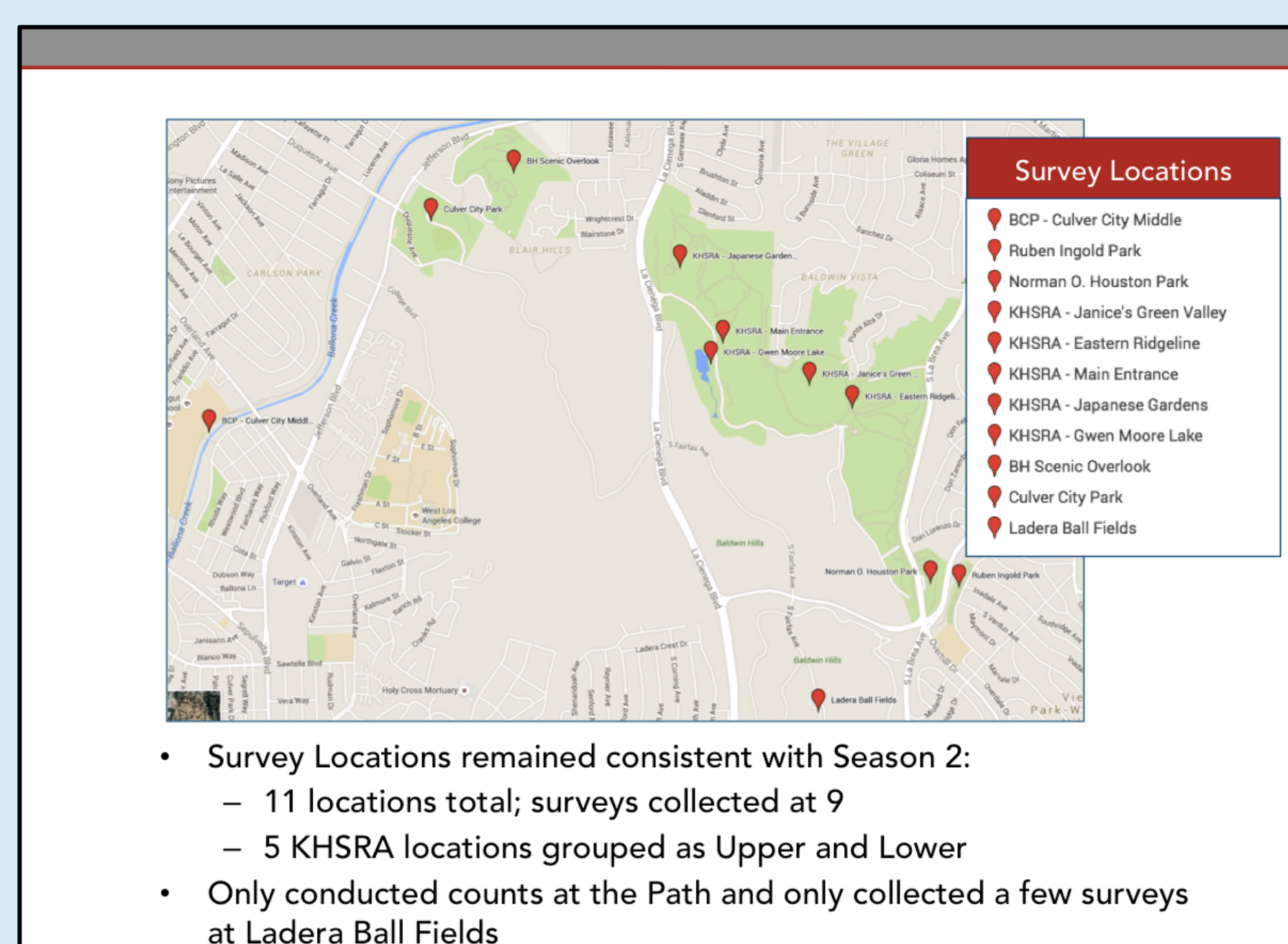LMU LA — Frank R. Seaver College of Science and Engineering

Abstract

The preservation and conservation of public open spaces are essential in urban settings as they promote the growth and sustainability of local communities and surrounding environments. The Baldwin Hills Conservancy manages the Baldwin Hills Parks System, and aims to promote recreation, restoration and protection of urban parks. In order to inform significant improvements to the parks system, a longitudinal study of the attitudes and behaviors of park visitors is being conducted. As part of the CURes (Center for Urban Resilience)/ TBF (The Bay Foundation) internship program, numerous LMU students administered a visitor survey over the course of 4 study seasons. This poster summarizes the survey findings from season 3, from June through September 2016. A total of 501 hours were spent in the park allowing for 416 surveys collected and 150 counts completed. Preliminary analyses on this data show several interesting findings, including a decrease in the number of users walking or cycling to the park throughout seasons, an increase in refusal rates by season, and evidence of a diverse user population. Future efforts consist of fully analyzing the collected data, and applying this study to public green spaces in Los Angeles as well as internationally.

Introduction

- Urban parklands provide important social and health benefits to the community and individuals (cite!!).
- This study seeks to gather information on the usage of several parks in the Baldwin Hills Park System.
- This study will inform ongoing initiatives, specifically the BH Master Plan and Park to Playa, along with additional recommendations for land development, restoration efforts, and resource allocation.

Methods

- The study gathers data through multiple methods: visitor counts, a user survey, observational research, and a game camera study of visitation
- Research Assistants are paired in groups of two and sent to preselected locations for 4 hours at a time where they administer park user surveys and conduct strategic visitor counts
- The survey asks questions about frequency of use, demographics, park activities, park accessibility, and environmental awareness

Survey Locations
- BCP - Culver City Middle
- Ruben Ingold Park
- Norman O. Houston Park
- KHSRA - Janice's Green Valley
- KHSRA - Eastern Ridgeline
- KHSRA - Main Entrance
- KHSRA - Japanese Gardens
- KHSRA - Gwen Moore Lake
- BH Scenic Overlook
- Culver City Park
- Ladera Ball Fields

- Survey Locations remained consistent with Season 2:
  - 11 locations total; surveys collected at 9
  - 5 KHSRA locations grouped as Upper and Lower
- Only conducted counts at the Path and only collected a few surveys at Ladera Ball Fields

Data

Table 1. Park user surveys collected and hours spent in the field.

Season	Pilot (Aug-Sep '15)	1 (Jun-Sep '15)	2 (Jan-Apr '16)	3 (Jun-Sep '16)	4* (Jan-Apr '17)	Projected Total
Surveys Collected	236	363	594	416	500	2,109
Hours in the field	unknown	532	453	501	480	n/a

Survey Refusal Rate

Season	Visitors Approached	Visitor Refusals	Refusal Rate
2	1,011	424	42%
3	932	516	55%

Season 3 Surveys by Location (n=416)

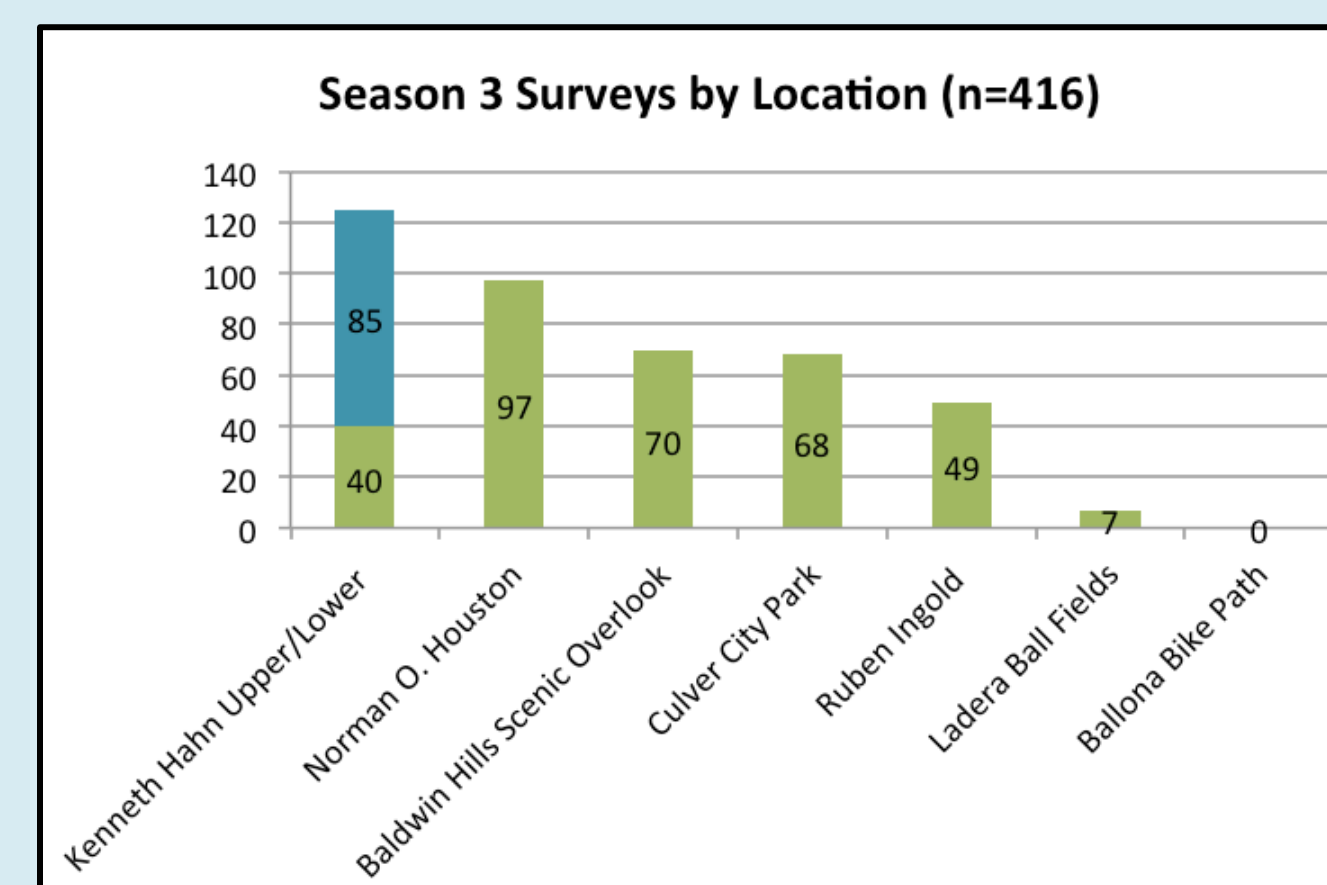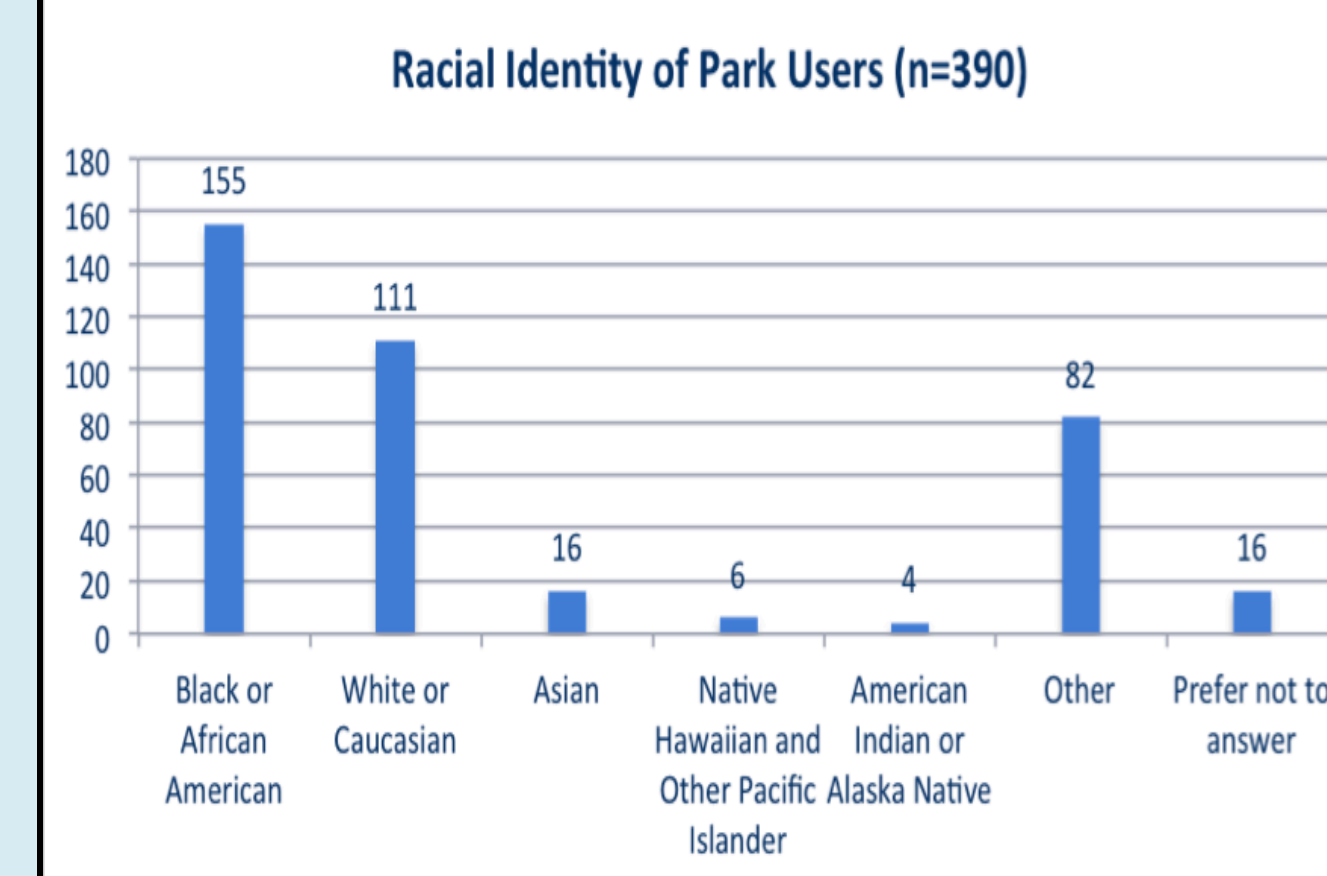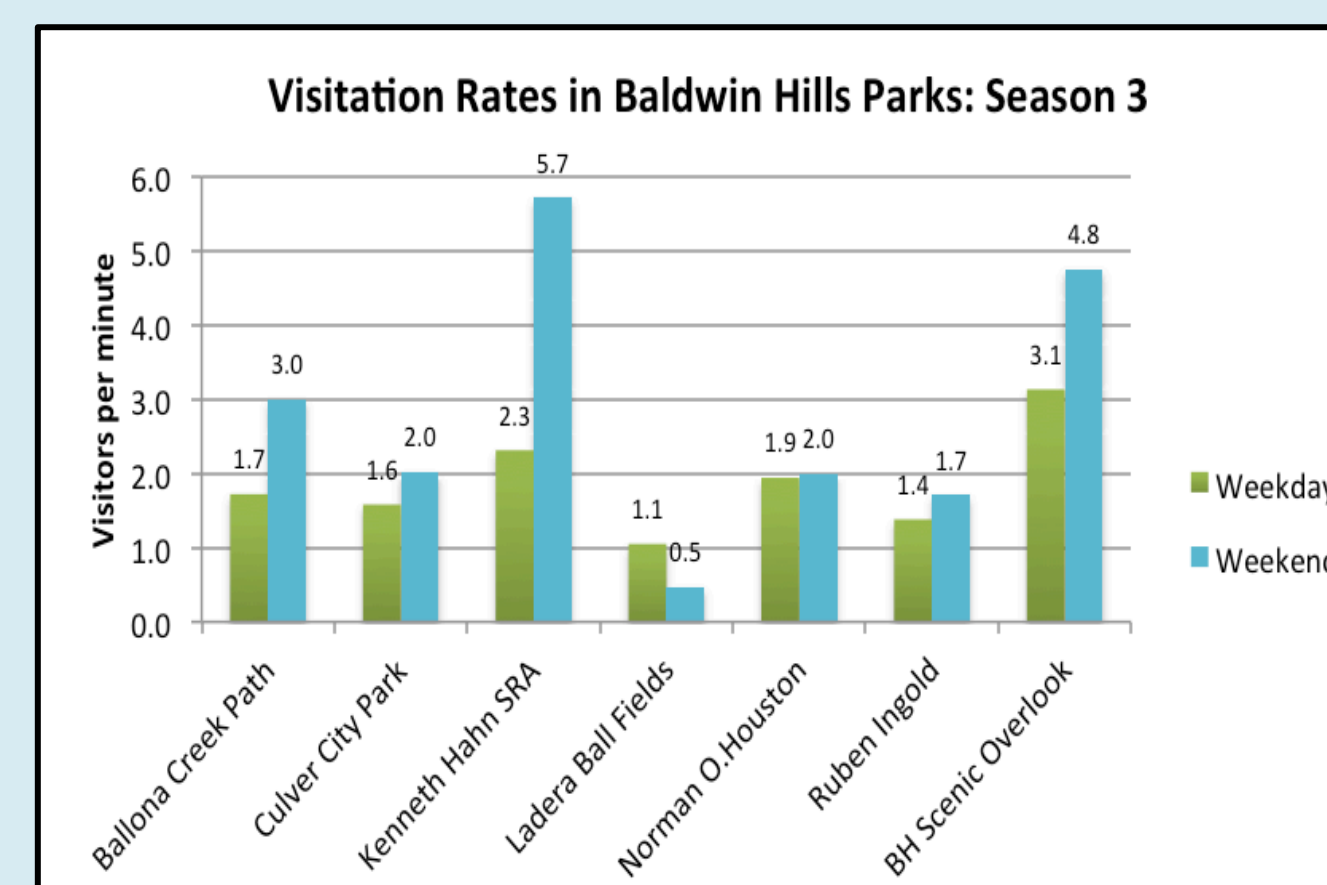**Visitation Rates in Baldwin Hills Parks: Season 3**

Table 2. Number of park visitors counted in a 15-minute period on weekdays and weekends.

Park Name – Time of Week	# Counts	Maximum Visitors	Minimum Visitors	Median Visitors
Ballona Creek Path - Weekday	21	41	4	24
Ballona Creek Path - Weekend	8	66	33	45
Culver City Park - Weekday	7	39	10	30
Culver City Park - Weekend	9	86	10	22
Kenneth Hahn SRA - Weekday	24	92	4	33
Kenneth Hahn SRA - Weekend	5	243	28	76
Ladera Ball Fields - Weekday	10	25	3	16
Ladera Ball Fields - Weekend	1	7	7	7
Norman O. Houston - Weekday	17	70	0	30
Norman O. Houston - Weekend	7	42	13	32
Ruben Ingold - Weekday	18	47	2	20
Ruben Ingold - Weekend	8	46	4	27
BH Scenic Overlook - Weekday	11	80	18	41
BH Scenic Overlook - Weekend	4	120	33	66

Select Findings – Mode of Transport

Mode of Transportation	How did you get to the park today?			If given the choice of transportation options, what would be your preferred way to get to the park?		
	Season 1	Season 2	Season 3	Season 1	Season 2	Season 3
Walk	12%	10%	9%	19%	24%	20%
Bike	10%	2%	1%	21%	18%	15%
Car/SUV/Truck	73%	87%	87%	54%	42%	54%
Bus	4%	0.5%	1%	2%	6.5%	6%
Train	0%	0%	0.5%	1%	6.5%	4%
Motorcycle/Scooter	1%	0%	0.5%	1%	1%	1%
Other	1%	0.5%	1%	1%	2%	1%

Racial Identity of Park Users (n=390)

Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino? (n=387)

Results

- 416 surveys were completed, which will add to the projected final total of over 2,000 surveys for the project
- 150 user counts were completed; 4,880 total park visitors were counted
- Refusal rates increased from Season 2
- Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area (KHSRA) had the highest visitation rate, averaging 5.7 visitors per minute on the weekends
- The 10% uptick in interest in public transportation (bus or train) from Season 1 to Season 2 dropped slightly in Season 3
- Largest park user groups by race: Black or African-American (40%), White or Caucasian (28.5%), and Other (21%)
- Of the 82 "Other" respondents, about half listed their race as a Hispanic or Latino ethnicity

Discussion

- Trends by season provide insight into park users and their behavior
- Analyses of all data from 2015-2017 will allow us to better understand:
  - The seasonal differences in park attendance
  - Trends over time
  - Differences in usage and activities by park
  - Place attachment and park value
- This study will provide the Baldwin Hills Conservancy with an improved understanding of their user population, which can help them to better allocate existing resources and seek additional resources as needed
  - Preliminary data have already been used in state funding applications
- Dr. Auger is incorporating the project into his LMU spring Environmental Studies course which has enabled a cohort of students to take an active role in the research as part of their education

Literature Cited

Chiesura, A. (2004). The role of urban parks for the sustainable city. *Landscape and urban planning, 68*(1), 129-138.
Dwyer, J.F., McPherson, E.G., Schroeder, H.W., &Rowntree, R. A. (1992). Assessing the benefits and costs of the urban forest. *Journal of Arboriculture, 18,* 227-227.

Acknowledgements