

From: [Doug Wetmore](#)
To: [Darrell Echols/CAHA/NPS@NPS](#)
Cc: [Mike Murray](#); [Sandra Hamilton/DENVER/NPS@NPS](#)
Subject: Re: PAIS vehicles
Date: 07/07/2010 09:22 AM

Thanks Darrell. I appreciate the thorough response. Please let me know if your contacts at PAIS have additional information.

~Doug

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▼ [Darrell Echols/CAHA/NPS](#)

**Darrell
Echols/CAHA/NPS**

To: Doug Wetmore/DENVER/NPS@NPS
cc: Mike Murray/CAHA/NPS@NPS
07/07/2010 05:52 AM Subject: Re: PAIS vehicles

Doug,

I believe that this commentor is misinformed. I do not recall Padre Island ever having any type of program that encouraged visitors to remain in vehicles to observe bird life.

Vehicle disturbance was an issue that we were trying to understand and was the subject of many research requests and projects. Park visitors were allowed to drive the entire beach with the exception of 4.5 miles that was closed for research purposes when the park was established in 1962. In my many years of being on the beach, I saw some folks that took the opportunity to stay in a vehicle to observe birds. In my opinion, I believe that this was mostly a factor of convenience rather than being done for the benefit of the birds. There were so many birds on the beach that if visitors were to get out to "glass" them with binoculars, they would become bored rather quickly and therefore driving along the shoreline to observe the largest number of birds, greatest diversity, or find that "rare" species was easier accomplished staying in the vehicle and driving the shoreline.

Our Interpretive program for many years included beach walks and bird tours. The beach walks were a walking tour of the beach in front of the Visitor Center that lasted about an hour. They did not drive vehicles as part of this program; however, some of the interpreters would discuss management issues in a larger context and would describe types of disturbances. It is possible that during the beach walk

visitors were encouraged to take into consideration their vehicle and it's possible affects on birds including disturbance if occupants exited the vehicle. My gut says that this was an uncommon occurrence since I can only think of one or two interpreters that would be that in depth with the bird program.

The bird tour was conducted during the winter, spring, and early summer months and was conducted by volunteers. This program required that visitors drive in a caravan to 8-10 spots to observe birds away from the highway. Vehicles were parked along the road and the occupants exited the vehicle to walk away from the highway. It is also possible that this program discussed bird management issues in a larger context that could have included vehicle disturbance.

There were no formal brochures, site bulletins or other programs that I recall that encouraged visitors to remain in vehicles. Our Resource Management program did not discuss this with visitors and none of the programs that we provided to the public included this encouragement.

There were two business permits issued for the purposes of conducting bird tours in the park. The first permit did not last an entire season and the business owner quit a few months after receiving the permit. I am not sure that actually conducted more than one or two tours. The second permit is still in effect today and has been for many years. The permit holder is Billy Sandifer and he is mostly a fishing guide that guides along the Gulf shoreline. He has conducted bird tours in an effort to supplement his income if the fishing trips are down. Billy is a very good amateur birder and probably has more hours at Padre Island than any staff person ever has. While I have not taken his tour, I believe that he could have included this topic in his presentation and very likely had his patrons remain in the vehicle while on the tour.

I have a call into the Chief of Interpretation at Padre to see if I am forgetting something or to see if things have changed since I left there a little over 2 years ago. I also have an email to Billy asking him the same questions. Hopefully I will hear something today and will forward that to you.

Hope this is helpful.

Darrell

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**Doug
Wetmore/DENVER/NPS**

To Darrell Echols/CAHA/NPS@NPS
cc

07/06/2010 04:29 PM

Subject PAIS vehicles

Hi Darrell.

We had the following comment on the DEIS:

"If the NPS were interested in providing a quality visitor experience they would recommend that visitors remain in their vehicles to observe bird life. This recommendation has been used for many years at Padre Island National Seashore since they recognized that birds are not as easily disturbed by vehicles which allows for closer and more meaningful observation"

Do you remember what the details of that program were at PAIS?

Thanks.

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