



Alagnak

Aniakchak

Katmai

Kenai Fjords

Lake Clark

Visitor Use at Katmai NPP

Understanding visitor use patterns across the parks and over time allows park managers to assess where rangers and staff need to be stationed and where impacts to resources (such as trampling) may need to be monitored or mitigated in the future. Likewise, visitor use patterns may also inform commercial business operators (such as guides or air taxis) by providing insights to the areas currently visited and the timing of visits, details that are helpful when planning their services.

Park Visitation

Over the last nine years, the number of visitor use days reported by businesses operating in Katmai National Park and Preserve (NPP) has fluctuated between 25,000 and 27,000 per year. Visitation patterns are affected not only by sport fishing and bear viewing opportunities, but also by national events. The economic downturn in late 2008 affected the number of visitors in the 2009 season. Visitation for Brooks Camp dropped by almost 2,000 visitor use days, and took three years to recover (Figure 1).

Hallo Bay, Geographic Harbor/Amalik Bay, Kukak Bay, and Swikshak Lagoon are some of the most visited locations on the Katmai coast, receiving over 5,000 visitor use days per year (Figure 1). Visitation to the other areas in the park's interior vary between years. This probably is due to the change in the timing and magnitude of salmon runs over different years, which are related to fishing and bear viewing opportunities.



NPS

Visitors bear watching at Brooks Falls, Katmai National Park and Preserve.

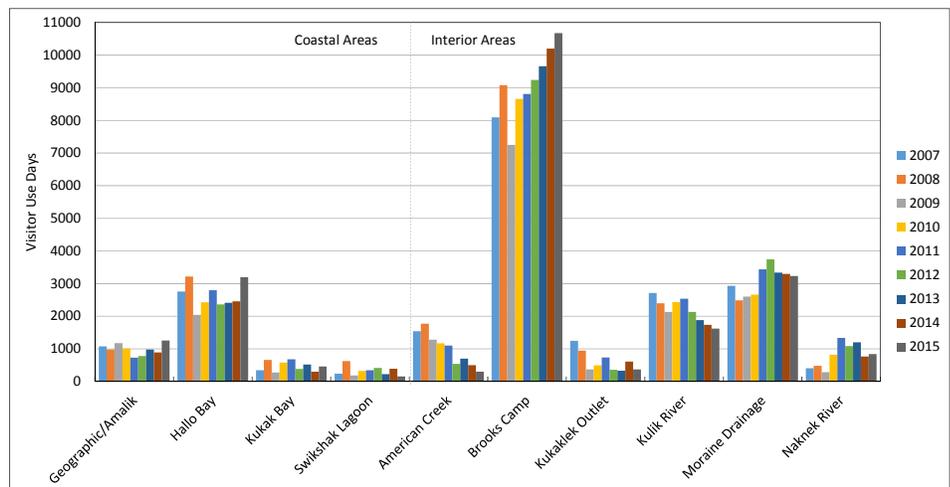


Figure 1. Bar graph by year of visitor use days by location (2007-2015) in Katmai NPP as reported by the commercial use operators. [Data from the Katmai NPP CUA database 03/30/16.]

Most of the visitation for Katmai NPP occurs in July and August. About 72% of the visitor use days occur in these two months (Figure 2). July visitation seems to be growing (almost 10,000 visitor use

days in 2015), whereas visitation in June and September declined or remained flat over the 2007-2015 period (Figure 2). Data from 2015 provide a snapshot of where the visitation occurred in each

month. Brooks Camp is busy in July when the bear numbers on Brooks River are at their peak, and much less in the other months (Figure 3). Moraine Creek has over 1,500 visitor use days in August, 600 visitor use days in July, and 350 days in September (Figure 3).

The main three activities reported by commercial operators are sport fishing, bear viewing, and air taxi, and these activities are not mutually exclusive (Figure 4). Other reported activities, such as big game transporters, hiking tours, and photography, continue to make up a very small percentage of visitor use days (Figure 4).

Methods

Remote Alaska parks do not have entrance stations to count people visiting the park, but the vast majority of visitors to Katmai NPP use a lodge, guiding service, or air taxi operator. These commercial operators pay a small fee for each visitor they bring to the park, and report back to the park the number of visitors, activities visitors are engaged in, and where within the park visitors go. Each park is divided into areas, roughly corresponding to watersheds. Areas with concentrated use have been subdivided into smaller areas to provide more specificity. The data collected by commercial operators are the primary means to quantify and understand visitation patterns and public uses.

A “visitor use day” is defined as each day a visitor is at the park engaging in some activity. Visitors who spend several days in the park will be counted each day according to where they go and what they do. This information is valuable for understanding how visitors enjoy the park and to identify potential management issues.

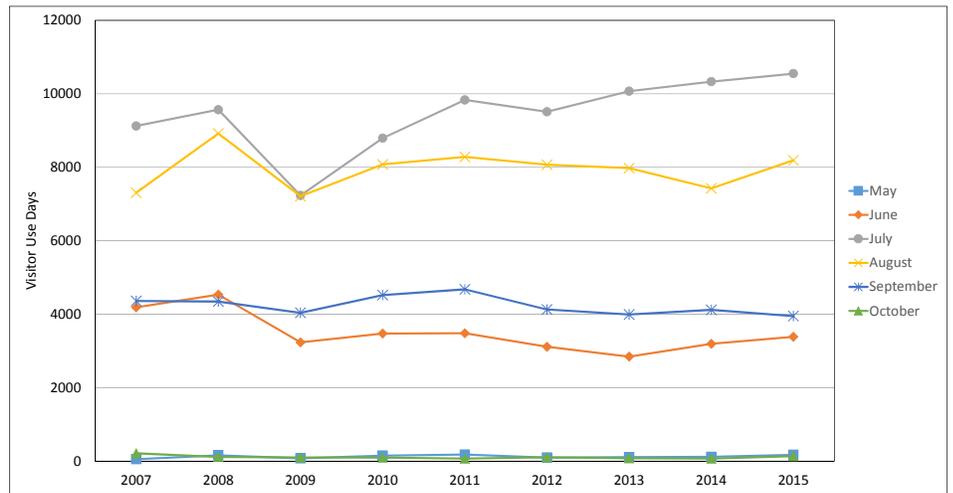


Figure 2. Line graph by month across the years of visitor use days for May through October for 2007-2015 for Katmai NPP. [Data from the Katmai NPP CUA database 03/30/16.]

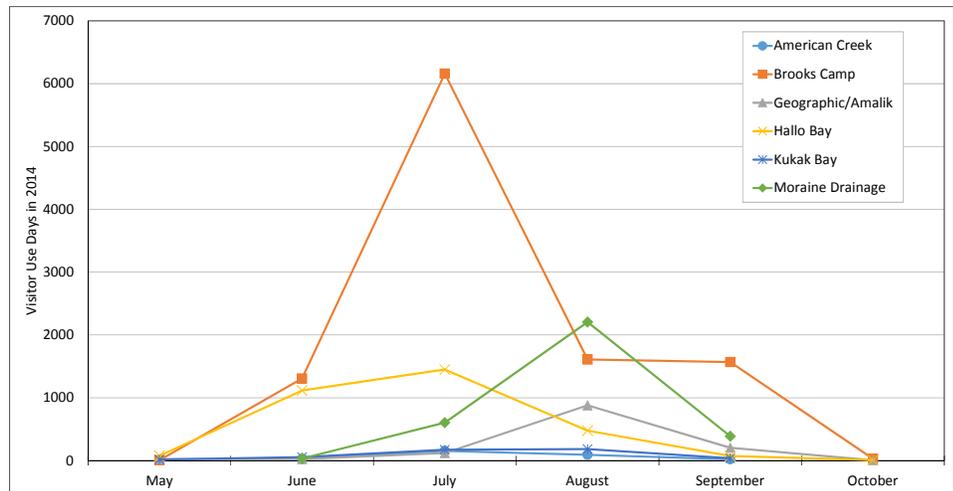


Figure 3. Use patterns across the season for 2015 for some of the most frequently visited locations in Katmai NPP. [Data from the Katmai NPP CUA database 03/30/16.]

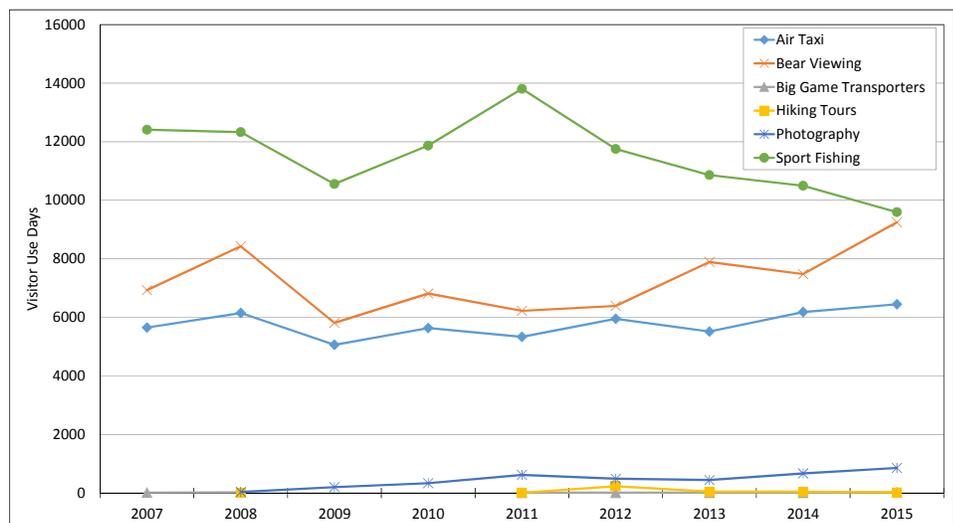


Figure 4. The number of visitors and their primary activities as reported by the commercial operators working in Katmai NPP, 2007-2015. Sport fishing, bear viewing, and air taxi services continue to be the most popular activities in Katmai. [Data from the Katmai NPP CUA database 03/30/16.]