



# Interpreters and Scientists Working on Our Parks iSWOOP2.0, Innovations

Martha Merson, Scott Pattison, Tracey Wright, Louise Allen, Nickolay Hristov

## What if researchers and interpreters had a better way of eliciting, supporting and extending the interests that visitors bring with them to the park?

### Practitioner Uses

- Practitioners could use the interview questions and poster vote, tailoring their talks to visitors' expressed interests
- Park staff or evaluators could collect data to inform annual planning.
- Park staff could use the tool with local residents in conversations about how the park could be responsive to their interests.

### Interest is a central component of learning

Park visitors see and hear about scientists' studies, but how does what they hear connect to their interests or spark new ones?

Why elicit visitors' interests?

A nuanced understanding of prior interests related to nature, science, and place is key to understanding the development of related STEM interests.

Gathering visitors' interests is not so straightforward. Put on the spot, visitors might freeze and say little.

Or, without a structure, an enthusiastic hobbyist might get going and not stop.

Why an instrument? Why can't you just ask?

Or visitors might prefer spending time with family rather than in a 1:1 interview.

### What we did

Project partners drafted two pilot interviews and activities--a card sort and a poster vote

Used a systematic sampling approach

Recruited families

Asked questions such as:

- What interests you about this park? What motivated you to visit this particular park?
- Why is this a good place to explore your interests?
- What are ways the park could better support your interests?

Reviewed data and instrument testers' reflections

Made revisions and wrote up findings

Made the report available on iSWOOPparks.com



*I like that. You care about me and my family. I felt connected.*

### Directions for future research

- What analysis approaches are best suited to the data collected, in keeping with the data collection goals of interpreters, evaluators, and researchers?
- What role can the interview itself play in advancing educational or stewardship goals? Can the interview open conversations about park-based research? How do such conversations unfold?
- How can the tool best be adapted for visitors from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, especially considering how the concept of "interest" might not always translate easily?

*... We come here [to the US] to work. Thinking about the culture here, the festivities, the national parks—spend a few more minutes on this. In the US you are part of a culture that values learning.*

Table 1. Overview of data collection by site and instrument

Site	Poster Vote	Card Sort
Sandy Creek Nature Center, GA	5	3
Drumlin Farm, MA	5	5
Elephant Butte Lake Park, NM	1	6
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, IN	5	4
Acadia National Park, ME	7	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>

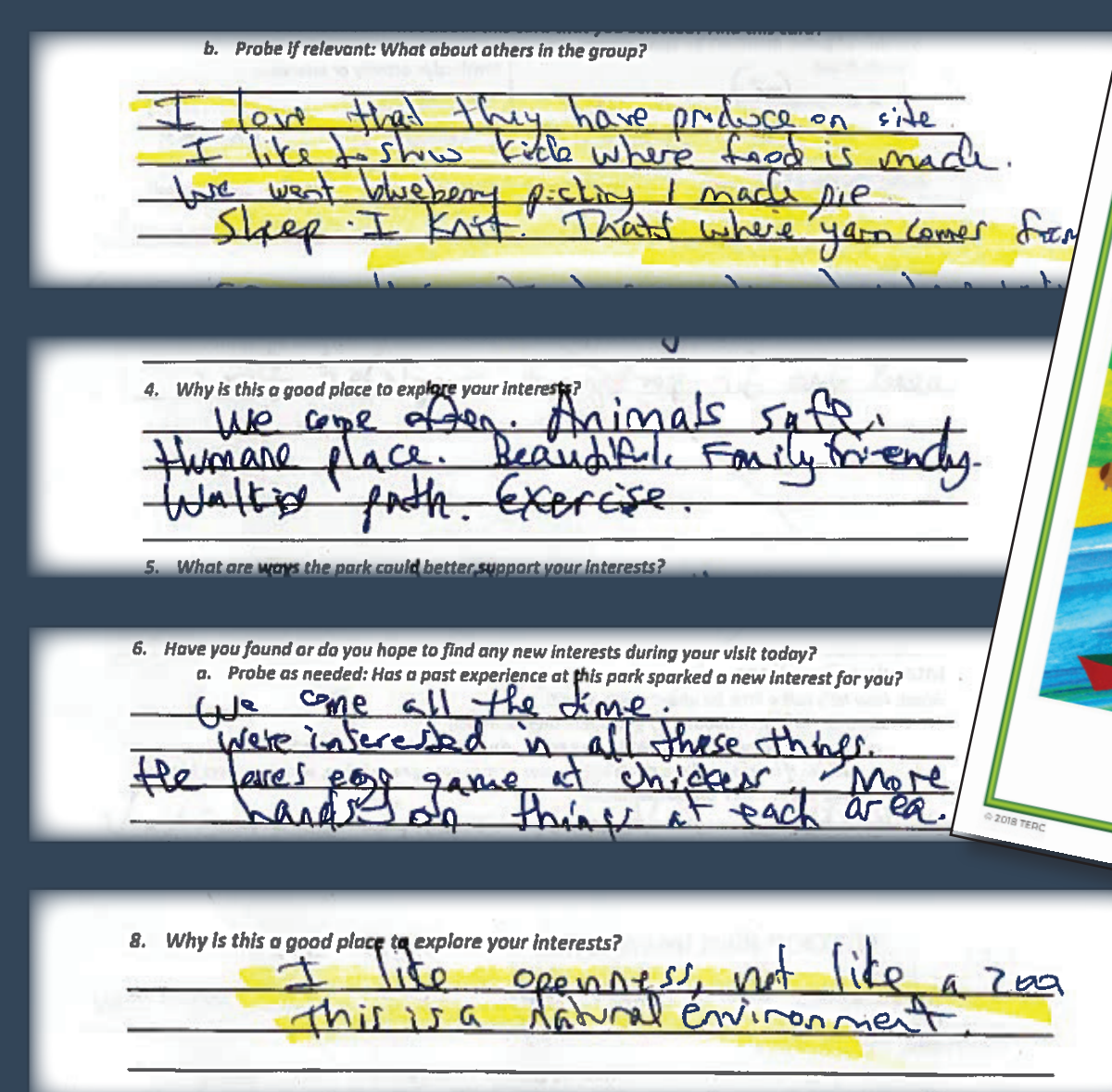


## You Can Elicit Interests • Run an Activity • Conduct a Group-Friendly Interview

Place three stickers to represent the topics and activities that motivated you to visit the park today

Tell me more ... about why you made these choices

How could the park support your interests? The park could offer ...



For example:

- Service learning or something educational
- Short-term data collection, a science volunteer opportunity
- Demo Abenaki style cooking
- More art to take home
- Craft activities
- Want to observe animals
- Excited about scavenger hunt
- More arts and crafts
- Do a farm to table program; cooking classes for kids.

