

1.4  
BILLION  
HOURS

That's how long visitors recreated in 400 of the 428 National Park System units last year, according to the 2023 NPS visitation statistics released this week. Visitation grew by 4% last year and has almost returned to pre-pandemic levels.



## FEATURED PARK



Photos and facts of  
your favorite parks,  
one issue at a time

### Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park Florida

**FACT 1:** Covering about 54,000 acres, Kissimmee Prairie Preserve is the largest remaining example of the dry prairie ecosystem in Florida. Characterized by seasonal cycles of fire and flooding, this ecosystem is home to more than 150 bird species, including the crested caracara.



**FACT 2:** Meaning *long water* in the native Jororo language, Kissimmee was declared Florida's first Dark Sky Park in 2016. This designation, granted by the International Dark Sky Foundation, recognizes the park's minimal levels of light pollution and unique value as a place to observe the night sky.

Nominate *your* favorite local, state, or national park [here](#) so our subscribers can learn about it.

# PARK PERKS








Visualizing key research to show why parks matter

While we may see them as isolated wildernesses, parks are usually linked to landscapes dominated by human activity. A 2022 [study](#) published in the journal *Nature Sustainability* examined whether socioeconomic conditions surrounding a park impact its ability to protect its natural resources from threats like poaching, habitat loss, and climate change. The authors collected park species and threat data during interviews with managers of 114 protected areas within 15 African and 10 European countries from 2007-2017. They then compared that environmental data against each location's Human Development Index (HDI) - a single [metric](#) measuring an area's human health, education, and standard of living. Using regression modeling, the authors assessed the relationship between this socioeconomic status, threats to biodiversity, and species protection/conservation efforts.

## Impacts of Socioeconomic Status on Park Resilience

Measured by host nation's Human Development Index (HDI)

	<b>High HDI</b>	 Minimal threat intensity	 More stable biodiversity; smaller declines at any threat level	 Additional conservation efforts have <b>no</b> impact
	<b>Low HDI</b>	Same threats have greater impact	Diminished species stability; faster decline when threatened	Interventions <b>most</b> effective at reducing threats

The study suggests that parks in regions with lower human health and income markers - *low HDI parks* - suffer greater biodiversity impacts from threats than parks in more developed areas. Added conservation effort was found to be most effective in low HDI parks. As conservation interventions increase in these areas, threat intensity decreases to that of high HDI parks. Further conservation effort, however, produces diminishing returns, and parks in healthier, wealthier regions still faced significant biodiversity threats.

Socioeconomic factors appear to have a significant effect on the intensity of threats but do not entirely account for their impacts. The authors argue that there may be natural limits to the effectiveness of a given park, suggesting a need for conservation measures beyond park borders.

## PLAY GROUND

What assignments do climate data scientists receive?

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