



National parks are now seen as prime research sites by scientists. Not only places of recreation, parks are important reservoirs of scientific knowledge. Volunteer citizen-scientists monitor the vital signs of tide pools, Cabrillo National Monument (California).



BioBlitzes — concentrated volunteer efforts over a short period that try to document as many species as possible within a park — have emerged in recent years as a popular way to get valuable scientific information. Young scientists gathering biodiversity data as part of a BioBlitz, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park (Louisiana).



The discovery in 1969 of heat-loving microbes near Great Fountain Geyser in Yellowstone National Park (Wyoming, Montana, Idaho) led to a wealth of unexpected scientific knowledge and benefits.



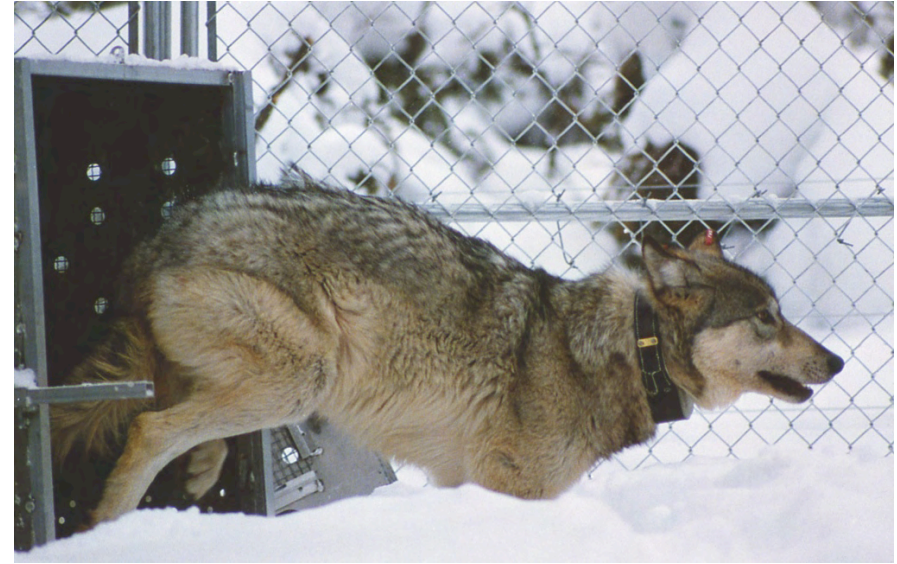
In recent years, social science research in national parks has taken off; here, a graduate student conducts a survey of visitors at Acadia National Park (Maine).



Spectacular scenery was the calling card of the first national parks, but as environmental understanding expanded in the 20th century, less-obvious but ecologically important landscapes, such as those of (l-r) Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve (both Florida) and Congaree National Park (South Carolina), were added to the national park system.



Scientists measuring the movement and retreat of Sperry Glacier, Glacier National Park (Montana). The Park Service is worried that the park's glaciers, all of which are shrinking, could disappear entirely.



In recent years, one of the most-anticipated scientific projects in the parks was the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park (Wyoming / Montana / Idaho) in 1995. These top predators are now firmly re-established in the park.



Another high-profile reintroduction has been the condor at Pinnacles National Park (California).



Attempts to create no-take zones (where fishing is banned) within Biscayne National Park (Florida) have been fought by sport fishing groups and their allies.