

# Visits to the Natural Environment

## Monthly update – August 2011



3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011

During August 2011, the adult population in England (aged 16 and over) took an estimated 267 million visits to the natural environment. This is ten percent higher than the 243 million visits in July 2011; it is also twenty five percent higher than the 213 million visits in August 2010. On average, 49 percent of the adult population visited the natural environment in the previous seven days during August 2011. A total of 2.6 billion visits were taken between September 2010 and August 2011.

Figure 1 illustrates the monthly volume of visits taken to the natural environment in the 12 month period from September 2010 to August 2011.

- The volume of visits in August 2011 was the highest recorded in the last 12 months.
- Although 25 per cent more visits were taken in August 2011 than in August 2010, the volume of visits taken was similar to that recorded during August 2009 (271 million visits).
- These variations may relate to weather conditions, with fewer days of rainfall in August 2009 and 2011 than in 2010.

Table 1 illustrates the estimated volume of visits by type of place visited in August 2011 and over the 12 months from September 2010 to August 2011.

- In August 2011, over half of visits were taken to places in the countryside (54 percent), a similar proportion to that recorded across all visits taken in the 12 months from September 2010 to August 2011 (53%).
- 9 per cent of August visits were taken to a beach, a higher proportion than over the overall September 2010 to August 2011 period (6 per cent).

Figure 1 - Volume of visits to the natural environment by month and type of place visited, Sep 2010 to Aug 2011 (millions of visits). Base: Minimum of 3,400 respondents per month

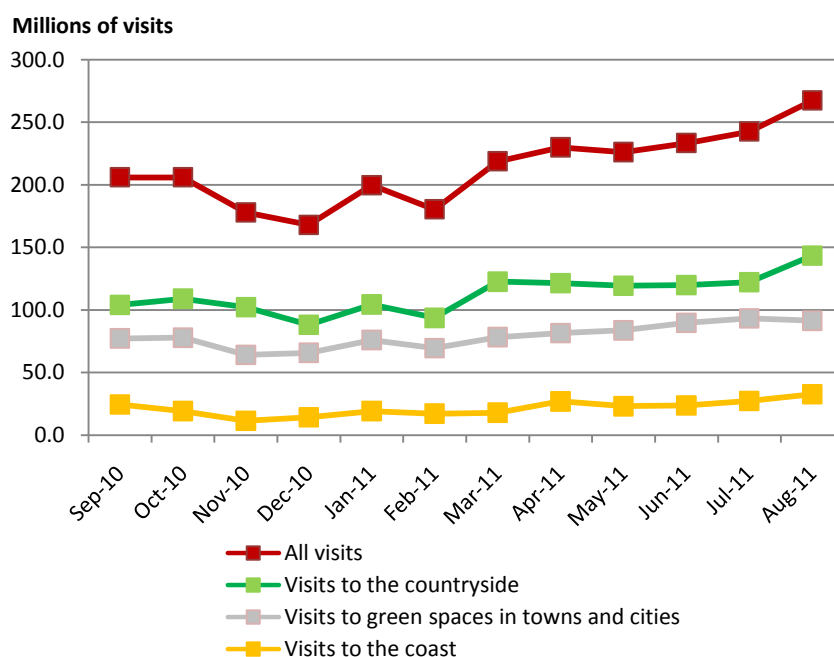


Table 1 - Volume of visits to the natural environment by place visited (millions of visits and percentage of total).

	Aug 2011	Sep 2010 – Aug 2011
<b>By general type of place</b>		
Countryside	143.4 (53.6%)	1350.4 (52.8%)
Town and city	91.4 (34.2%)	948.4 (37.1%)
Coast	32.6 (12.2%)	257.3 (10.1%)
<b>By specific type of place</b>		
Park in a town or city	60.0 (22.4%)	575.5 (22.5%)
Path, cycleway, bridleway	37.5 (14.0%)	382.1 (14.9%)
Another open space in the countryside	35.3 (13.2%)	297.3 (11.6%)
Woodland/forest	30.7 (11.5%)	332.4 (13.0%)
River, lake, canal	30.4 (11.4%)	261.1 (10.2%)
Farmland	25.2 (9.4%)	236.1 (9.2%)
Beach	24.4 (9.1%)	157.3 (6.2%)
Playing field or other recreation area	23.4 (8.8%)	208.3 (8.1%)
Country park	18.7 (7.0%)	181.0 (7.1%)
Another open space in town or city	18.1 (6.8%)	196.4 (7.7%)
Village	16.7 (6.2%)	179.3 (7.0%)
Other coastline	10.2 (3.8%)	87.7 (3.4%)
Children's playground	7.4 (2.8%)	73.8 (2.9%)
Mountain, hill, moorland	7.3 (2.7%)	58.9 (2.3%)
Allotment/community garden	2.5 (0.9%)	18.6 (0.7%)

Respondent base: Aug 2011 (N=3,527), Sep 2010 to Aug 2011 (N=45,733)

Note percentages for specific type of place may total more than 100 because respondents could select more than one type of place per visit.

Table 2 shows the volume of visits by type of activity undertaken.

- During August 2011, 48 percent of visits involved walking with a dog, while just over a quarter of visits (26 percent) involved walking without a dog.
- Other significant activities included playing with children, eating or drinking out and visiting an attraction.
- Compared to the overall September 2010 to August 2011 period, a higher proportion of the visits taken in August 2011 involved picnicking (5 per cent compared to 2 per cent) or playing with children (12 per cent compared to 9 per cent).

Figure 2 shows how the proportion of adults taking visits in the last 7 days has varied since March 2009.

- During August 2011, an average of 49 percent of the adult population reported taking one or more visits to the natural environment in the previous 7 days.
- This is four percentage points higher than the figure recorded during July 2011 (45 per cent) and six percentage points higher than in August 2010 (43 per cent).

The average duration of visits in August 2011 was 2 hours and 26 minutes and the average distance travelled was 8.5 miles. The average duration of visits is higher than recorded for the overall September 2010 – August 2011 period reflecting the longer daylight hours, milder weather and longer distance journeys likely to be taken in the August holiday period.

Around a third of visits (30 percent) in August 2011 involved expenditure with the average spend per visit being £39. This is significantly higher than the 12-month average (£27).

**Table 2 - Volume of visits to the natural environment by activity (millions of visits and percentage of total).**

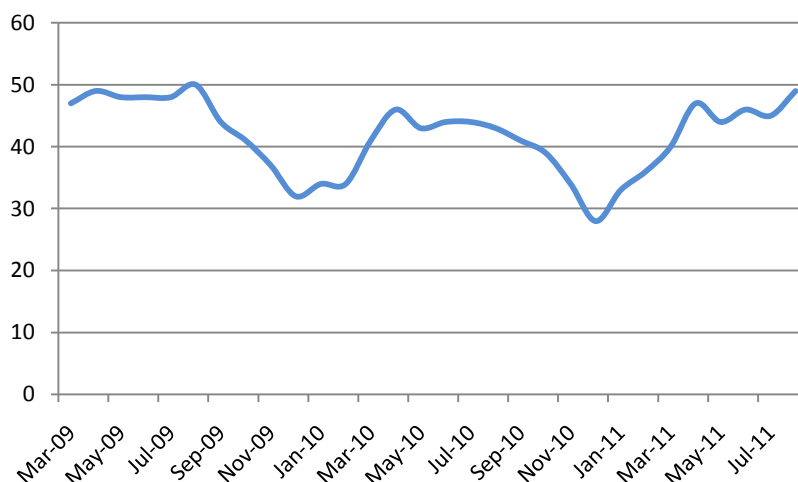
	Aug 2011	Sep 2010 – Aug 2011
<b>Activity</b>		
Walking, with a dog	129.4 (48.4%)	1309.2 (51.2%)
Walking, not with a dog	70.1 (26.2%)	674.0 (26.4%)
Playing with children	31.7 (11.9%)	226.0 (8.8%)
Eating or drinking out	18.3 (6.8%)	149.5 (5.8%)
Visiting an attraction	13.9 (5.2%)	88.3 (3.5%)
Picnicking	12.6 (4.7%)	55.2 (2.2%)
Informal games and sport	9.5 (3.6%)	72.9 (2.9%)
Visits to the beach, sunbathing, paddling in the sea	9.0 (3.4%)	48.4 (1.9%)
Wildlife watching	8.8 (3.3%)	73.9 (2.9%)
Running	8.0 (3.0%)	75.5 (3.0%)
Appreciating scenery from your car	6.4 (2.4%)	48.3 (1.9%)
Road cycling	6.2 (2.3%)	53.3 (2.1%)
Horse riding	3.8 (1.4%)	28.6 (1.1%)
Off road cycling/mountain biking	3.5 (1.3%)	27.0 (1.1%)
Fishing	2.7 (1.0%)	15.4 (0.6%)
Swimming outdoors	2.4 (0.9%)	11.6 (0.5%)
Watersports	1.3 (0.5%)	16.5 (0.6%)
Fieldsports	0.5 (0.2%)	9.3 (0.4%)

Respondent base: Aug 2011 (N=3,527), Sep 2010 to Aug 2011 (N=45,733)

Note percentages for activity may total more than 100 because respondents could select more than one activity per visit.

**Figure 2 - Percentage of adult population taking visits in the previous 7 days by month, Mar 2009 – Aug 2011.** Base: Minimum of 3,200 respondents per month

**Percentage of adult population**



**Table 3 - Visit duration, distance travelled and expenditure during visits**

	Aug 2011	Sep 2010 - Aug 2011
<b>Average duration of visits</b>	2 hours 26 minutes	1 hour 57 minutes
<b>Average distance travelled to reach visit destination</b>	8.5 miles	6.3 miles
<b>Percentage of visits involving any expenditure</b>	30%	24%
<b>Average expenditure per visit (excluding visits with no spend)</b>	£39	£27

Respondent base for distance and duration: Aug 2011 (N=3,527), Sep 2010 to Aug 2011 (N=45,733)

Respondent base for expenditure: Aug 2011 (N=905), Sep 2010 to Aug 2011 (N=10,611)

The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural environment (MENE) survey is undertaken weekly across England. It focuses on people's use and enjoyment of the natural environment, defined as the green open spaces in and around towns and cities as well as the wider countryside and coast. It excludes time spent in private gardens. To find out more about the survey visit: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/research/mene.aspx>