

Editorial by Valerie Braun



eco.mont now enters its fourth year. In our first editorial, the editors wrote that eco.mont *should trigger further research, spur on scientific debate and inspire the people who manage protected areas*. Within the last three years, many topics were covered in the journal dealing with social and ecological systems, the impact of global change on protected mountain areas (PAs), land use and land-use changes, management of PAs as well as interaction between these issues. PAs introduced themselves without glossing over difficulties, thus going beyond the high-gloss brochures. Books were reviewed and introduced and news about ongoing events were spread. The editors, the editorial board, the authors as well as numerous blind-peer reviewers – which we would like to thank

explicitly at this point – have put a great deal of work into the project to establish eco.mont as a journal for and on protected mountain areas research and management.

Luckily for eco.mont, the debate on PAs research and management issues never ceases. In St-Pierre de Charreure, France, a workshop was organized by ALPARC (Network of Alpine PAs) and the Regional Park Charreure as well as ISCAR (International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps) focusing on future priority issues for PAs. Researchers, PA managers and representatives of PA networks discussed and reflected on the current state of research. This resulted in an article submitted to eco.mont under the title *Societal research perspectives on protected areas in Europe*. Six priority research areas were identified clustering around a range of themes and raising new questions on future needs of PAs.

Cultural and natural heritage are the topics of two articles in this issue. The rich natural heritage of the Natural Reserve Les Contamines-Montjoie, which covers more than 4000 ha of the Mont-Blanc Massif is described in detail in *Geomorphological heritage, conservation and promotion in high-alpine protected areas* by Jean-Baptiste Bosson & Emmanuel Reynard. The article focuses on the geotourist and educational potential of this area. Elements of cultural landscapes in Berchtesgaden were surveyed by Manuela Müller in connection with the European ECONNECT project. This article points out the importance of saving cultural landscapes from total eradication, which would also be a big step towards the protection of species.

Another article was also part of the European ECONNECT project: *Improving connectivity in the Alps – Implementation in the pilot region Northern Limestone Alps* by Daniel Kreiner, Alexander Maringer & Lisbeth Zechner. It focuses on the process of encouraging large forest owners to promote near-natural forests in an effort to protect the white-backed woodpecker.

Monitoring plant species at the roadside of a transit road leading through the Swiss National Park was the focus of a long-term study lasting 42 years. The results are presented in the article *Local plant species replace initially sown species on roadsides in the Swiss National Park* by Sabine Güsewell & Frank Klötzli.

The effects of climate change on social systems in mountain areas are manifold and complex. Yet studies on this topic are still rare. Rodney Garrard describes the effects of climate change on people living in and around Huascarán National Park in the Cordillera Blanca in Peru. The people living in the area are not only facing a water crisis due to the glaciers melting but also fear the privatization of water which has already engendered numerous conflicts.

Two reports from two completely different regions of Europe deal with both the establishment and a nomination of a PA: the proposed Samothraki Biosphere Reserve in Greece and the nomination of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Dolomites, in Italy three years ago. The first describes the transdisciplinary process and the involvement of local residents in the idea of a Biosphere Reserve and the latter deals with the challenges of an already established PA where each involved region has to take on responsibilities.

The current issue again is a colourful issue, not only because of its many illustrations but also because of the topics it introduces. We do hope that the spark of eco.mont will spread further and contribute to future discussions about protected mountain areas.

Valerie Braun
Editorial office, eco.mont

Related projects according to the **European Mountain Pool**

At the editorial office of eco.mont, we maintain the **European Mountain Pool** on research in European protected mountain areas.

<http://www.alparc.org/our-actions/research-platform/european-mountain-pool>

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Related projects in the **European Mountain Pool:**

Geomorphological heritage, conservation and promotion in high-alpine protected areas *by Jean-Baptiste Bosson & Emmanuel Reynard*

Graf Kurt: Geomorphological mapping in the Swiss National Park, CH-3778

Gude Martin: Analysis of geomorphic terrain units by field evidence and GIS modelling in the Abisko Mountains, CH-3115

Kotarba Adam: Geomorphic dynamic studies in the Abisko area, CH-3107

Reynard Emmanuel: Inventory of geomorphosites of Parc Jurassien Vaudois, CH-4419

Local plant species replace initially sown species on roadsides in the Swiss National Park *by Sabine Güsewell & Frank Klötzli*

Jungmeier Michael: Longtime monitoring in the Hohe Tauern National Park (in collaboration with Berchtesgaden NP, D; Ecrins NP, F; Swiss NP, CH), CH-1331

Franz Helmut: Establishment of a monitoring database on botanical data for long-term environmental survey, CH-2940