

Editorial by Michael Vogel



Many, if not all, managers and administrations of protected areas are concerned with two main issues. First, protecting the natural resources within their sphere of responsibility and agency, i.e. the quintessential task of a protected area. Secondly, with the issue of sustainable use of their territory. Responses to these issues come together in practical management that includes the option of “doing nothing” and which is based on weighing up the parameters controlling these two issues. Targeted study of the basics is an essential precondition for concrete action. All of us working in protected areas need research and its findings; at the same time, protected areas themselves are important areas of research and investigation.

The articles in this issue reflect all of that. Protected area administrations must be able to link information using GIS and GIS systems, which must also be further developed for such tasks. One important question for many areas of responsibility in a protected area is “What is there now?” but even more important is the question “What if?” To answer it, you have to become aware of connections and interdependencies and make others aware of them. *Wallner, Schmidt & Haller* talk about that in their contribution.

Recognizing interdependencies and making others aware of them through public relations, communication, environmental education and even in political consultancy – this is what *Mauz et al.* encourage us to do in their article on observing change in species diversity. Our task as protected areas is communicating with our visitors and the population at large. The article of *Geyer et al.* centres on participation, cooperation, knowing and recognizing partners, vital aspects if protected areas want to succeed in their indispensable role as initiators and agents of sustainable regional development.

Recognizing long-term trends and developments is essential in dealing with visitors and people looking for recreation in our protected areas. We must use data on space, time and objects interactively to capture the demands and activities of these visitors and derive our management requirements from them. In his article, *Juraj Švajda* warns that demand for nature-oriented recreational activities across the seasons is likely to increase further. This calls for urgent and close cooperation between researchers, specialist agencies, planners and local actors.

Protected areas are centres of biodiversity. Protecting such biodiversity is a key task of any protected area administration. As the environment changes, we must investigate how, when and under which conditions populations of animal and plant species change. This should then be followed by the search for and application of appropriate management measures. *Szűcs et al.* talk about these issues in the case of alpine amphibian populations.

Protected areas and their surrounding regions are home, living and economic space to many people. Protected area administrations need to recognize the potentials for conflict as well as for development in the short and the longer term and to pursue appropriate and sustainable development through communication and cooperation with and among the relevant groups of actors. In this context, *Timari & Joshi* present the case of a biosphere reserve in the Himalayas.

In sum, what is the appeal to research in and on protected areas:

Protected areas as areas, spatial units and administrations are more than just a green designated area. They are functional units and as such major centres of biodiversity, they are intersections and interfaces of culture and nature, research establishments and research areas, service providers and third sector businesses, initiators and agents of sustainable regional development, places of environmental education and public relations, major regional economic factors as well as home, living and economic space for many people.

If the protected areas are to fulfil all these functions and deal with all these issues, they need research and its findings and they need it across disciplines, oriented at functions and target groups.

The journal *eco.mont* provides a platform for debate about all the aspects mentioned above. Please make use of this opportunity. I am sure, the protected area managers and administrators will try and integrate your insights and findings into their activities.

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Related projects according to the **ProClim database**

http://4dweb.proclim.ch/4dcgi/ProtAreas/en/BuildSearch_Protected_Areas

At the editorial office of eco.mont we maintain the **ProClim database** on research in European protected mountain areas. It provides information on the research going on in the various protected areas. It aims to make scientists and PA managers aware of related projects. You can search the database by keywords and/or names to find out about research relevant to your own work and interests. Please help us keep the database up-to-date by providing details on your own projects to the editorial office of eco.mont (valerie.braun@oeaw.ac.at). Below we have listed projects related to articles in this issue of eco.mont. Please note that we cannot guarantee that this list is complete.

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Carpathian Biosphere Reserve (Ukraine): Towards Participatory Management by *Juliane Geyer, Fedir D. Hamor & Pierre L. Ibisch*
Resource utilization pattern and rural livelihood in Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve buffer zone villages, Uttarakhand, Himalaya, India by *Prakash Tiwari & Bhagwati Joshi*

Contribution for Improvement of Visitor Monitoring in the Tatra National Park by *Juraj Švajda*

Can protected mountain areas serve as refuges for declining amphibians? Potential threats of climate change and amphibian chytridiomycosis in an alpine amphibian population by *Marc Sztatecsny & Walter Hödl*

Potentials and limitations of coordinated spatial and non-spatial information management in protected areas: requirements of park projects in Switzerland by *Astrid Wallner, Ronald Schmidt & Ruedi Haller*

Related Projects in the **ProClim database**:

Rüegg Erwin: How to turn alpine landscapes into an asset of development? Institutional prerequisites and conditions at the local and regional level, PN: 4048-064423

Lange Eckart: VisuLands – Visualization Tools for Public Participation in the Management of Landscape Change, PN: 2239

Mose Ingo: Biosfera Reserve of Val Müstair – Parc Naziunal: Acceptance of the planned UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, PN: 3611

Hunziker Marcel: How does the local population view biosphere reserves? A cross-cultural study between Ukraine and Switzerland, PN: CH-2227

Coy Martin: Future Development Strategies for the Biosphere Reserve Großes Walsertal – A Regional Economic and Perceptual Analysis, PN: CH-3461

Grünbühel Clemens M.: Footprints: Integrated Research in the Ötztal Region – Assessing the past, present and future, PN: CH-3246

Weibel Robert: Relevanz- und Useranalyse im Schweizerischen Nationalpark, PN: 3772

Horsfield David: Cairngorms – Trampling and browsing damage, PN: 1577

Siegrist Dominik: VISIMAN. Entwicklung einer flexiblen Management-Plattform für das Besuchermonitoring in Parks, PN: 3789

Filli Flurin: Besuchermonitoring SNP, PN: 3862

Lehar Günther: Besucherzählung, Wertschöpfungs- und Motiverhebung im Nationalpark Hohe Tauern, PN: CH-2735

Stöcklein Bernd: Besuchermanagement-Konzept für winterliche Freizeitnutzung und Möglichkeiten der GIS-gestützten Visualisierung im Nationalpark Berchtesgaden, PN: 3695

Barancok Peter: Influence of global climatic changes and natural and anthropogenous stress factors on changes of biodiversity of selected high-mountain ecosystems, PN: 3008

Allgöwer Britta: Knowledge Based Dynamic Landscape Analysis and Simulation for Alpine Environments, PN: 4048-064432