

Editorial by Günter Köck



The Alps, or rather the Hohe Tauern part of them, are at the heart of this issue. This is no coincidence, as in June 2013 the Hohe Tauern National Park Centre in Mittersill hosted the 5th Symposium for Research in Protected Areas, which attracted top scientists from 20 different nations. More than 150 researchers presented results of their work there and have elaborated some of these for the current issue. So it is only natural that Kristina Bauch and Ferdinand Lainer, both experts from Hohe Tauern National Park, should introduce 'their' park as the Case in Point. They demonstrate that research in the national park has always been a major concern and will continue to be so. In addition, Kupper et al. trace the long and stony path from the first conservation ideas to the implementation of Hohe Tauern National Park in 1995. This article summarizes Kupper et al.'s excellent book *Geschichte des Nationalparks Hohe Tauern* (Kupper & Wöbse 2013).

Two articles point out the great scientific value of long-term monitoring: Fischer et al. recall the extensive glacier monitoring within Hohe Tauern National Park, which enjoys a long tradition here, with glacier maps available all the way back to the early 17th century, a rare treasure for scientists. In their study, Mayer and Erschbamer investigated the effect of grazing on species diversity in mountain pastures with Gurgler Kamm Biosphere Reserve, where summer grazing has been practised for over 6 000 years. It turned out that a certain degree of grazing stress has a positive affect on the biodiversity of mountain grasslands. Biodiversity is also the theme of two further articles: Oertli et al. present an innovative method for (re)creating small freshwater habitats in the mountains, a method they developed in a test area in the Swiss Alps and which is to help protect species diversity in Alpine water bodies. Christian Körner summarizes some of the key drivers of environmental change in mountain ecosystems that need to be taken into account in planning and management. He also describes selected environmental effects (e.g. land-use aspects) on plant societies and ecosystems.

The paper of Voll and Luthe synthesizes systemic aspects (e.g. category of a protected area, participation of the population) on sustainable governance in protected mountain areas and outlines topics for future research.

Two contributors write on mountain areas outside the Alps: the study by Conradin et al. explores the effects of World Natural Heritage status on two mountain areas in East Africa, i.e. Mt. Kenya and Mt. Kilimanjaro, while Thompson et al. investigated the contribution of statutory planning processes to sustainable land use in national parks of England.

The 40th anniversary of the Austrian National Committee for the UNESCO research programme Man and the Biosphere (MAB) gave me the opportunity to sketch the development of the international and the Austrian MAB programme in this issue and to underline the success of one of the oldest MAB National Committees as a best-practice example.

Dear eco.mont readers! It may have surprised you to receive another eco.mont so soon after the December 2013 issue. The reason for this is the decision by the editors and the editorial board to change the eco.mont publishing times from June and December to January and July for organizational and procedural reasons. In an effort to make this change as pleasant as possible for authors and readers, we did not postpone the publication of the next issue but rather inserted an additional one. We hope that you will like the new publishing dates.

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