

SESSION THEMES

Parks & People

a) Park objectives in transformation: What are parks for and why do we want them?

While environmental protection implicitly (but rarely explicitly) hovers in the background of protection rationales, other aspects come forth (i.e. economic development, preserving cultural identity and landscapes etc.). Hence we ask: is nature protection what it seems to be or needs the concept to be rethought? Living in the Anthropocene we must provocatively ask ourselves if and how a segregative approach to nature protection still makes sense. We want to raise the awareness to what nature protection actually means, how it could be envisaged (differently), and invite critical contributions.

b) Integrated planning and management policies for protected areas - a European perspective

Conceiving Protected Areas (PAs) as strongly connected to their context is beneficial if not indispensable for both the surrounding landscape (PAs spreading benefits beyond boundaries) and for PAs themselves (PAs tackling important sources of pressure - such as urbanization, tourism or industrial activities - often situated outside their boundaries).

Are PAs in Europe actually trying to implement policies that look also at their surroundings? The session aims at investigating this topic with reference to both planning (e.g. integration between PAs planning and regional/urban planning) and management issues (e.g. coordinated management between PAs authority and other authorities).

c) Zoning in strategic planning and management of protected areas and their surroundings

Aim is to address, compare and recommend further role and effectiveness of zoning in strategic planning and management practices for achieving the protection and sustainable development of protected area (PA) and its local and regional functional surrounding.

Research themes should address the following:

- the role of zoning in strategic planning and management;
- the relation and integration of zoning with land-use planning, tourism development, traffic development and water protection in planning and management;
- the assessment of zoning and land-use effectiveness in protection and sustainable development.

d) Parks and people - reconciling park management with local and regional development - activities on the ground

In Eastern European Large Protected Areas (LPA) as for example in the Caucasus and Carpathian networks, State Nature Agencies are preserving a unique biodiversity as a very positive and huge inheritance of the former socialistic planning system. This session will focus on current challenges of LPA management in Eastern Europe with a particular attention on contradictions between local people's views and nationally to internationally - including the international nature conservation organizations - determined sectoral planning strategies.

Participants discuss possible benefits LPAs offer local populations, analyse the reasons for conflict between conservation interests from outside the region and local people vital needs, and explore ways of uncovering, tackling, and solving land use conflicts at the interface of protected area management and sustainable local development.

"Ultimately conservation is about people. If you don't have sustainable development around these (wildlife) parks, then people will have no interest in them, and the parks will not survive."

Nelson Mandela, former President, Republic of South Africa, "Mandela goes Green" - A hunting trip converts the ANC leader to conservation. Mail&Guardian Online, 5 April 1991.

Parks & land use

e) Sustainable agriculture in protected areas

Grassland ecosystems have more or less changed over large areas due to the grazing of cattle, horses, sheep and goats since centuries. A number of grassland vegetation types especially in the montane to supalpine stage have been created by clearing and grazing and require permanent pasture management to preserve them. They characterize the image of cultural landscapes (secondary grass communities). In the alpine stage, these are increasingly moving to near-natural grassland communities (primary grass communities).

Within the scope of the session, the individual influencing factors with regard to their effects on vegetation and soil will be presented in more detail. In particular, the effectiveness of management measures with regard to the sensitivity of different biotope types and an assessment of the measures from the point of view of farming and nature conservation will be dealt with in more detail.

f) Protected areas governance and ecosystem services

By putting emphasis on collaborative governance approaches at the local community level, the session aims to discuss how, in the specific context of protected areas, governance regulates, influences and changes the use of ecosystems and natural resources and what this implies for ecosystem services provision and biodiversity conservation. Reference to empirical cases is particularly encouraged to illustrate the linkage between governance, ecosystem management and ecosystem services.

g) Protected areas' landscapes as resources for human health and well-being

Landscapes of protected areas (PA) harbour not only a high biodiversity, they attract tourists and even may positively influence the health of visitors. If PA provide restorative effects for humans, then such benefits can be used for sustainable regional development.

This workshop

- provides an overview on current activities in PA,
- explores what effects different types of natural landscapes can have on human health, and
- develops recommendations for PA planning, visitor management, and research. Researchers and PA managers are invited to present their activities.

h) Protected forest areas - lessons learned from long-term research

The session will focus on concepts of long-term research in protected forest areas. A specific characteristic of forest ecosystems is the long time horizon of the development cycle. Thus, monitoring and research concepts require a specific design to capture long-term ecosystem dynamics. Questions how to adapt silvicultural methods relating to climate change respectively non steady-state conditions of a continuously changing climate need long-term data as a decision basis. The workshop session will contribute also to upcoming research questions on ecosystem services and biodiversity conservation.

Parks & management

i) Progress in long-term research and monitoring

In this session, we are looking for presentations on long-term research and monitoring with a focus on:

- the understanding of ecosystem evolution
- adaptive management practices based on long-term monitoring
- the detection of environmental and social change
- the application of resurvey studies

j) Managing wildlife in and around protected areas

The management of wild animals such as ungulates is an important issue in and around most protected areas. Management approaches and practices considerably differ between protected areas. This session will showcase new findings, contribute to the understanding of land-use conflicts caused by contrasting expectations of different stakeholders regarding wildlife management, and address new challenges arising from a changing climate and the integration of large predators. The session will include talks, posters and a chaired panel discussion.

k) Conservation conflicts in protected areas

Conflicts between conservation of natural landscapes and human activities are intensifying. At the focus of this session are protected areas, which are set aside to protect biodiversity and to maintain natural character but due to their natural resources and sometimes close vicinity to urbanized areas and tourist resorts they are met by various interests. The aim of this session is to explore on past and present conservation conflicts within and close to protected areas. We are looking for:

- conflict management strategies,
- case studies of past and present conflicts,
- and possible conflict solutions.

l) Human-wildlife conflict management and resolution

Human-wildlife conflicts are receiving increasing attention in Europe and in the World, mainly due to the return of large carnivores in several mountain areas. This session aims to provide an overview of the current situation in protected areas, highlighting how human-wildlife conflicts are perceived, managed and with which results. Protected areas can promote innovative/useful ways to prevent and manage this kind of conflicts, analyzing different interests and values, increasing the general knowledge and fostering the cooperation among policy makers, special interested groups and local people.

m) Bridging science and management in protected areas

We are looking for contributions focussing on the following issues:

- What are the reasons for setting up a research concept for a park?
- Who is engaged in designing the research concept and how is it put into practice?
- What possibilities have protected areas found to bridge science and management?
- What are the assets, drawbacks and limits of these different possibilities?
- Under what conditions do they contribute to a fruitful collaboration between scientists and managers?

Parks & biodiversity

n) Biodiversity shifts in a changing climate

In a warming climate, many species are shifting to higher elevations. This may fundamentally change the distribution of certain key species, habitats and communities, and thus have large impacts on biodiversity. This session aims at:

- presenting evidence of climate induced changes in distribution and biodiversity at the species, community and ecosystem level
- identifying drivers, follow-up effects, and buffers against distribution change and biodiversity loss
- discussing strategies and actions that could counteract climate-induced range shifts and biodiversity losses

o) Endemic species - a neglected biodiversity treasure?!

Endemics are the treasure of biodiversity. They have a narrow distribution. Most of them are rare, stenotopic and cold-adapted. The dramatic change in environmental conditions due to climate warming and habitat loss lead to a high endangerment of endemic species.

- What do we know about these rarities?
- How do we take care of them?
- Where are the hot-spots of endemism in the Alps?
- What role do they play in environmental checks, in the work of Departments of Nature-Protection and management plans of National Parks?
- Are we willed and are we able to protect these last unicorns from becoming extinct?

p) Biodiversity - conservation in protected areas

By their very definition, protected areas play a significant and indispensable role for biodiversity conservation in Austria. Many threatened species are critically dependent on protected areas and on an appropriate management of their populations there. The session will deal with the assessment of biodiversity in protected areas, species assemblages and their response to management interventions, the prioritisation of species conservation measures and the relevance of biodiversity assessment studies for the development of management measures in protected areas.

Of particular interest would be methods of species assemblage evaluation, analytical approaches to the quantification of biodiversity and biodiversity impacts, and species prioritisation. Special emphasis will be given to bryophytes and amphibians, taxa with a high proportion of species dependent on protected areas and specifically tailored protective measures.

q) Wilderness and process dynamics

‘Wilderness’ has grown to a substantial topic in the conservation community in the last decades. In the session we want to focus on ecosystem dynamics of wild lands and the implications for protected areas management (e.g. the spontaneous wilderness restoration concept).

We welcome oral and poster presentations about empirical research and monitoring as well as modelling of ecosystem dynamics in protected areas: on spatial and temporal patterns (effects of natural disturbance on biota and site/soil conditions, formation of niches, soil species distribution, succession, biodiversity) and on related processes along the soil-plant-atmosphere continuum (effects on water, greenhouse gas fluxes etc.) and consequences for the provision of ecosystem services.

We also appreciate contributions on related theories, concepts for policy and management, networks and databases.

r) Ecological connectivity

Ecological connectivity has been identified as a valuable tool for addressing needs for ecological preservation and environmental protection as well as societal needs in a complementary fashion. Protected areas (PA) play an important role in the implementation of a pan-alpine ecological network. This session should offer the possibility to highlight latest developments in this field and the changes this represent for the management of PA. A particular attention will be given to the services provided by ecological connectivity implementation and the socio-economic dimension of the activities.

Parks & water

s) Alpine headwaters and lakes

Lakes and headwaters worldwide are faced with severe environmental changes caused by Global Climate Change. Rising water temperatures and a changed discharge regime will have dramatic consequences. It is still unknown what the consequences will be for species composition and ecosystem functioning. As protected areas provide pristine freshwater systems, they are ideal areas for investigating potential alterations. In this session we want to share the knowledge concerning the current status of lakes, springs, springbrooks and glacier-fed headwaters in protected areas. This will help to define general criteria for conservation strategies and to plan possible counteractions as well as long-term monitoring projects.

t) Fluvial landscapes in protected areas

River ecosystems are connected on large spatial scales, have varied drivers, strong, and often conflicting, societal interests, and interacting management processes. River or river stretches with high nature value and near-natural site conditions and dynamics are integrated parts of protected areas from high altitudes down to low lands. This session covers an insight into the systemic properties of such ecosystems and their role in and outside protected areas. Rivers and floodplains build up ecological corridors and are so in many ways connected with differently used landscapes. This connectedness should be presented by recent research and discussed as a focus of further research and evaluation.

u) The cryosphere in a warming climate

All components of the cryosphere show changes in response to a warming climate. This session aims to present research results on changes of snow, ice and permafrost, and/or the respective effects on ecological, hydrological and socioeconomic systems. The session welcomes all kinds of methods and disciplines. Presented studies can cover for example time series analysis, remote sensing, field measurements, numerical modelling or methods in social science. Special attention will be given to interdisciplinary or process studies linking causes and effects of the changing components of the cryosphere.