

Editorial by Massimo Bocca



As mentioned in the first issues of *eco.mont*, protected mountain area managers act in heterogeneous situations, due both to environmental and geographical aspects, and to legal and administrative obligations. Every protected area must adapt its own policies to a specific context, making it very difficult to adopt shared operating standards on a wide geographical scale.

However, only creating an efficient ecological network can guarantee adequate medium and long-term environmental conservation. It is therefore clear that there is a need for greater sharing of methodologies via the exchange of scientific and technical experiences. The variety of topics faced in this issue addresses these needs and suggests many interesting aspects for discussion.

Rupf et al. have studied the impact of winter sports activities on capercaillie, a species of major naturalistic value in Central Europe, included in the Annex I of the new European Union Birds Directive (2009/147/EC). This situation, as in many other articles edited in past issues of *eco.mont*, stresses the importance of research in protected areas for a correct integration between conservation policies defined on a continental scale and regional management actions. Moreover, the study shows interesting technological remote-sensing applications in a mountain landscape (GPS logging, camera traps).

Robinson et al.'s study deals with three interesting experiences of freshwater monitoring applicable to long-term biomonitoring protocols for streams, lakes and flood plain management in a global change context. The topic of water conservation is also related to the work by *Volken et al.* about renewable sources of energy; in fact, in Alpine protected areas (particularly in regional nature parks), the most critical energy source is water rather than wind and solar energy.

Four contributions analyse, in different ways, the purposes of protected areas from the point of view of resident and visiting human populations, discussing this topic in very different situations. In the Cinturón Andino Biosphere Reserve (*Borsdorf et al.*), in a context of obvious climate change and social conflicts, farmers were encouraged to develop organic farming techniques, with positive results in large cities close to the park and, more generally, for the sustainability of human activities. The situation is more critical in Sochi, where the exclusion of the local population and of the Sochi National Park from the preparations of the XXIIth Winter Olympics (*Scharr & Steinicke*) risks an increase in the environmental impact of infrastructures and their subsequent management. On the other hand, the analysis carried out for the management of the World Heritage Site Jungfrau-Aletsch (*Gasser & Wiesmann*) provides for thorough regional monitoring aimed at identifying possible critical situations, not only within the WHS, but also in the wider area including various municipalities; taking into account the basic UNESCO criteria, a monitoring programme was implemented that highlights critical values leading to strategic management decisions. Still in Switzerland, *Karthäuser et al.* compared residents' and visitors' attitudes towards a new biosphere reserve, commenting on the possible management implications of the resulting findings; both residents and tourists highlighted the unspoilt character of Val Müstair as the only selling point of the region.

The importance of communication about protected areas was highlighted by two contributions. *Liesbeth Deddens* analysed the importance of social media in stakeholders' engagement, providing some pilot examples which can be used for communicating research results. *Dörte Martens* remarks that the perception of different values associated with different methods of forest management is influenced by the level and quality of information. In this sense, it is desirable that the emphasis given to the subject in 2011 by the International Year of Forests increases the public's perception of maintaining and increasing wild forests, limiting that emotional condition characterized by sadness which is often associated with places managed for centuries by men and then abandoned.

Finally, it is important to stress the role of the bodies managing protected areas in the design and implementation of long-term standard monitoring practices in collaboration with universities and research institutes. In the description of natural phenomena and in the socio-economic field, the long-term presence of trained and motivated staff is in fact an ideal working condition which is difficult to achieve in other operational contexts.



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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:**

Perception of and attitudes towards a new Swiss biosphere reserve – a comparison of residents' and visitors' views *by Johanna Maria Karthäuser, Flurin Filli & Ingo Mose*

Backhaus Norman: The attitude of the local population towards the Swiss National Park, CH-4238

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

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Oertli Beat: Biodiversity Monitoring of Alpine Ponds (Macun, Swiss National Park), CH-3853

Oertli Beat: 8 years of monitoring the ponds on Macun (SNP): evolution of biodiversity in relation to climate warming, CH-4418

Robinson Christopher Thomas: Macun monitoring programme, CH-2201

Assessing the spatio-temporal pattern of winter sports activities to minimize disturbance in capercaillie habitats *by Reto Rupf, Martin Wytenbach, Daniel Köchli, Martina Hediger, Salome Lauber, Pascal Ochsner & Roland Graf*

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