

Challenges in Conserving Private Protected Areas: where are the opportunities?

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Keywords

nature conservation, protected area, private land, qualitative research

Abstract

Globally, formal protected areas (IUCN categories of protected areas) have undergone significant change in past few decades with respect to their ownership structure. Establishment of the earliest protected areas involved converting private land into public; however, with the growing demographic pressure and the simultaneous demand to increase the size and number of protected areas to halt biodiversity loss, private land as protected areas has begun to play a significant role in biodiversity conservation. This study focuses on private land under nature conservation in different forms of protected areas in Poland, namely a national park, a landscape park and a Natura 2000 site which is the most recent form of nature protection in the country (19.8% of Poland is under Natura 2000) as a relatively new Member State. Site selection process required use of satellite imagery in cases of protected areas where data on private ownership inside the protected area was not available. In order to examine the standpoints of different stakeholder groups on the importance and challenges of private land conservation, research methodologies from social and socio-psychological fields were used, such as qualitative in-depth interviews and Q methodology. Problem definition and understanding of various perceptions is imperative for successful mitigation of potential conflicts and also effective implementation of conservation on private land in Poland.

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ZOBODAT - www.zobodat.at

Zoologisch-Botanische Datenbank/Zoological-Botanical Database

Digitale Literatur/Digital Literature

Zeitschrift/Journal: [Nationalpark Hohe Tauern - Conference Volume](#)

Jahr/Year: 2013

Band/Volume: [5](#)

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