

Late 2021 saw the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Glasgow, Scotland under the presidency of the UK in partnership with Italy. The COP26 hosted almost 200 countries, which agreed the Glasgow Climate Pact to keep the 1.5°C goal alive and to revisit and strengthen their current emissions targets to 2030. Yet many critical voices declared COP26 a failure, since hopes were ultimately dashed that a commitment would be made to stop burning fossil fuels by 2030.

The later part of 2021 also saw the first session of the fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) take place; the second session of this two-part summit will be held in 2022. The COP15 to the CBD is expected to provide a global biodiversity framework for the conservation, protection, restoration and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems for the next decade.

Since climate change and the conservation of biodiversity are interconnected, both events are of great importance to developing solutions and implementation plans designed to meet climate targets and preserve biodiversity. While these two summits showcase the responses on a global political scale, the relevance of the underlying issues is mirrored in the articles of this edition. The contributions explore how the interconnectedness of climate change, biodiversity and human activities impacts protected areas at a regional level.

In the article *Beyond the victim number: faunistic and ecological data from a road-mortality study in the Iron Gates Natural Park, Romania*, authors Severus-Daniel Covaciu-Marcov, Bogdan-Ionuț Lucaci, Alexandra-Roxana-Maria Maier, Achim-Mircea Cadar, George-Adelin Ile, Amalia-Raluca Dumbravă and Sára Ferenczi report on the impact of a 154 km long road upon fauna in the area. They observe how mild winters, caused in part by the warm local climate but exacerbated by global warming, affect the activity period of cold-blooded animals, exposing more animals to road mortality.

The study on *Habitat suitability evaluation for *Paeonia decomposita*, based on a MaxEnt model* by Peihao Peng and Yu Feng predicts the species distribution of *P. decomposita* and supports the establishment of nature reserves to protect endangered plants, since their habitats are severely disturbed by human activities such as livestock grazing, logging, construction of roads and operation of hydropower plants.

The impact of management activities on three Regional Nature Parks in Switzerland is presented by Thomas Hammer, Roger Bär, Albrecht Ehrensperger, Andreas Friedli, Karina Liechti, Astrid Wallner and Thea Xenia Wiesli in *A holistic assessment of the impacts of park management: findings from the evaluation of Regional Nature Parks in Switzerland*. Protected areas face national and international expectations (e.g. to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, to combating climate change and to the energy transition) and expectations by the local population and actors. These expectations shape the park's strategic goals and management activities, the benefits and impacts of which are evaluated by the authors.

Jessica Oehler gives us an insight into the traditional irrigation system in the Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch UNESCO World Heritage Site. The irrigation channels are an important cultural-historical element which have produced a structurally rich cultural landscape of high biodiversity but are threatened by more efficient water sprinklers, by the work required to maintain the irrigation system and by the availability of water, which is influenced by climate change.

Sonja Trachsel, Ruth Moser, Birgit Reutz and Rebecca Göpfert introduce the AgriPark project in their article *How can farmers be better integrated into nature parks? AgriPark – Transdisciplinary development of approaches for better cooperation between agriculture and Regional Nature Parks*. Two rounds of workshops were held across three Regional Nature Parks to examine proposed measures aimed at more closely integrating agriculture into Regional Nature Parks in Switzerland. The measures selected include implementing a platform for sharing experiences and incorporating best practices, thematic inputs and coaching support into the process.

Saroj Shrestha, Ang Phuri Sherpa, Sony Lama, Munmun Tamang and Prakash Kumar Paudel report on sightings of Bengal tigers (*Panthera tigris*) in Nepal at higher altitudes in *Tigers at higher elevations outside their range: What does it mean for conservation?*. The authors conclude that factors such as food, scarcity of water and rising temperatures might contribute to the tigers venturing to higher elevations.

A short Report on the *International Symposium of Mountain Studies, part of the 34th International Geographical Congress, Istanbul (16–20 August 2021)* by Alexey Gunya and Fausto Sarmiento introduces 11 presentations delivered at the conference exploring the development of mountain research methodology.

As the impacts of climate change continue to escalate and biodiversity declines due to human interference, protected areas may not be able to buffer these effects. However, such areas present many opportunities that could encourage society to reconsider the issues involved at both local and global levels.



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