

Comparative research on protected areas in Switzerland – a thematic catalogue

The Swiss parks of national importance have been established with the aim of maintaining and enhancing exceptional natural habitats or landscapes of outstanding beauty. At the same time, these parks promote sustainable economic development of the regions concerned. With the creation of 17 parks within just 4 years after the implementation of the new parks legislation, there is a great demand for research on these parks as well as a demand on the part of the park administrations for research results on various management-relevant topics. In order to support the Swiss Federal Environment Office in coordinating research on parks of national importance, an expert group on protected areas research was established in Switzerland in 2009. The members of this expert group work in different Swiss research institutions and represent a variety of disciplines.

The group's main task during the last two years has been to draw up a thematic catalogue of relevant research topics for comparative research on protected areas in Switzerland. With the topics presented in the catalogue, the expert group aims at strengthening and cultivating the dialogue between science and park management in the long run. The topics cover the following issues: identity with the park; park governance; economic and regional development; biodiversity and ecosystem services; recreation and education; interaction between parks and their surrounding areas. Disciplinary topics such as hydrology, energy or forestry are not mentioned explicitly in the catalogue, rather, they are integrated into transdisciplinary research projects.

The catalogue is a first step towards developing a research strategy on protected areas in Switzerland. Researchers as well as park managers are invited to actively engage in the proposed topics and draw up concrete research question for the topics. The evolving research projects shall provide a basis for long-term studies, which are essential for a systematic observation of the development of the park regions, in other words, for monitoring the protected areas. In this sense, the expert group has set the starting point for an overall programme *Research on Swiss Parks*.

The thematic catalogue is available at: www.parkforschung.ch

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Parks discussed in this issue

Abbreviations: NP – National Park; BR – Biosphere Reserve; p. – page

