

Maffei, G., M. Bocca & D. Baroni 2018. *Uccelli nidificanti in Valle Aosta. Distribuzione ecologia fenologia conservazione*. Testolin. ISBN: 8899602085 [In Italian]

The Aosta Valley in Italy runs south through the Alps between Mont Blanc, the highest peak of the Alps, and Monte Rosa. In this area of 3262 km², 133 breeding species of birds are found, described in detail in this beautiful book, which is based on data collected between 1998 and 2017. Each species is presented with a distribution map, photographs of the birds and their habitats, and a text of one to several pages. The texts give details on distribution, phenology, ecology, numbers (if available), and the conservation issues faced by each species. For the mapping, 449 4-km-squares were used. The authors themselves stress that this is not a traditional breeding-bird atlas, as the data were collected over a twenty-year period and not in a systematic way. But the book does give a good overview of the avifauna of this Alpine region.

The diversity of bird species in the Aosta Valley is high due to the great differences in altitude: the area ranges from 310 to 4810 m asl. The book's Introduction presents the different habitats found in the region. The most widely distributed bird species are the Black Redstart, Chaffinch, Wren, Willow Tit, Coal Tit and Mistle Thrush. At the lower elevations are found species whose main distributions are in the Mediterranean region, such as the Subalpine Warbler and Melodious Warbler. On the other hand, at the highest altitudes we find species like the White-winged Snowfinch, Wall-creeper and Alpine Accentor. The Bearded Vulture was introduced to the nearby area of Haute Savoie in France and the birds now breed in the Aosta Valley.

Land use changes affect many of the specialized bird species in the Aosta Valley. Due to land abandonment the region saw an expansion of forest cover. The result has been an increase in numbers of some forest birds, including the Pygmy Owl, while on the other hand the loss of suitable open habitats for species like the Common Whitethroat and Ortolan Bunting has resulted in a drop in their numbers.

Using this new book, it is interesting to compare the avifauna of the Aosta Valley with that of Valais in Switzerland, which is just north of the study area and is 2000 km². While many species show similar distributions, some Mediterranean species, such as the Red-billed Chough, are more common in the Aosta Valley; the Short-toed Snake-Eagle has 14 territories in the Aosta Valley and only one in Valais. Species which are extinct in Valais or have become extremely rare, such as the Little Owl and Ortolan Bunting, still have small breeding populations in the Aosta Valley.

Even if *Uccelli nidificanti in Valle Aosta* is not a real breeding-bird atlas in the traditional sense, the book provides much detailed information, which can and should be used for the conservation of the Aosta Valley and its habitats.

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Job, H., M. Fließbach-Schendzielorz, S. Bittlingmaier, A. Herling & M. Woltering 2018. *Akzeptanz der bayrischen Nationalparks. Ein Beitrag zum sozioökonomischen Monitoring in den Nationalparks Bayerischer Wald und Berchtesgaden*. Würzburger Geographische Arbeiten, Volume 122. Würzburg University Press. ISSN 0510-9833. ISBN 978-3-95826-102-0. [In German]

Large-scale protected areas in Europe have experienced tremendous increases in both numbers and surface area over recent years and decades, with national parks being the most prominent and best-known category. Their importance for the conservation and development of biodiversity, for the protection of valuable landscapes, and for establishing a sustainable basis for human existence at large appears almost indisputable from a scientific perspective. However, the implementation of new national parks (NP) often becomes a subject of controversy and debate among those who are affected directly. Local populations and stakeholders alike frequently hold different views on how a NP may affect future economic development and the lives of people in adjacent areas, with negative associations often outweighing positive ones.

A very recent publication by the well-known geographer Hubert Job and colleagues from Würzburg University, Germany presents the findings of empirical studies carried out in two Bavarian NPs, Bayerischer Wald and Berchtesgaden, offering new insights into park–people relationships and local people's and stakeholders' overall acceptance levels of *their* NPs. Both NPs have prominent roles as large-scale protected areas in Germany: while Bayerischer Wald is known for being the country's first NP, Berchtesgaden remains Germany's only high mountain NP. The histories of both NPs are also connected with highly controversial political debate.

The methodology of the studies carried out in 2017 and 2018 used state-wide online questionnaires addressed to the population of Bavaria as a whole, to which more than 2000 people responded. The studies also included several qualitative interviews with selected experts in the field, as well as paper questionnaires addressed to local residents in both NP areas. Almost 4000 completed questionnaires were returned for the two parks combined. As a result, the surveys allowed an impressive dataset to be created, the extent of which has seldom been achieved. In addition, the data allowed the authors to draw exciting conclusions regarding economic, emotional, interpersonal, sociocultural and spatio-temporal predictors of local people's and stakeholders' acceptance of the two NPs.

As for the results of the studies, among other findings the surveys clearly show that both NPs are considered to have high value for regional development, especially with regard to new jobs created (e.g. in the NPs' administrations) and additional infrastructure put in place (e.g. visitor centres). The latter is especially relevant for tourism, which has benefited

the most from the NP status of the areas. Both NPs have established themselves as brands well known for their attractions. However, local residents of the NP areas are more critical of legal regulations, which are often perceived as limitations to individual freedom. Therefore, regular and transparent forms of information and communication appear essential tools for increasing acceptance. Finally, as time has passed and as NPs have gained in maturity, park-people relationships have improved noticeably over recent years, with the younger population in particular expressing the highest level of support for the idea of NPs.

Research addressing the acceptance of large-scale protected areas and NPs in particular has expanded considerably since the late 1980s, in Germany, Europe and even world-wide. In Germany, studies have been carried out over the last three decades for the majority of NPs. However, the methodological approaches used and the data gathered are sometimes difficult to compare. The recent study is a welcome addition to this exciting and relevant area of research, offering profound and valuable new knowledge concerning the two NPs investigated as well as confirming the applicability of the methods used. As the authors point out, the desiderata of research in this field are more than obvious, including comparative studies in other NPs and regular monitoring of the level of acceptance of NPs. As for this particular study, our only complaint is that the publication is currently available only in German. Nevertheless, may it encourage and inspire future research in this demanding field!

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Siegrist, D. 2019. *Alpenwanderer – Eine dokumentarische Fußreise von Wien nach Nizza*. Haupt Verlag. ISBN 978-3-258-08122-9. [In German]

In a project called *whatsalp*, a group of Alpine experts walked from Vienna to Nice in 119 days across the entire Alpine arc in the summer of 2017. But *whatsalp* was much more than *just* a long-distance walk. The project was aimed at documenting the current state of the Alps and talking to a variety of local people along the way. Across the 1800 km long journey, the core group of Swiss geographers, Dominik Siegrist and Harry Spiess, plus the Austrian experts on the Alps, Christian Baumgartner and Gerhard Stürzlinger, was joined for bits of the way by around 200 walking companions. Along the route, a total of about 70 local meetings and events were held in Austria, Switzerland, Italy and France, attracting several hundred participants. The walking group spoke with people living in the Alps, debated with environmentalists, met tourism managers and interviewed researcher colleagues on topical issues of the Alpine space. Recurrent questions that emerged were: Do nature and tourism have to be opposites? How can the destruc-

tion of the Alpine space by traffic and climate change be halted? Will young people still have a future in their locality? What will the Alps look like in 25 years?

The route largely retraced the route which some members of the *whatsalp* core group had taken 25 years ago within the precursor project *TransALPedes*. This allowed some very interesting comparisons with the situation in 1992. *whatsalp* co-initiator Dominik Siegrist has now published a fascinating book about the adventures, encounters and observations of the walking group.

In it he documents the striking changes in the Alps over the 25 years since the *TransALPedes* tour and the traces that humans and natural events have left behind in the landscape. In 45 short chapters Siegrist includes descriptions of the route sections, experiences, what the group got to hear, but also a so-called *Themenfenster*, a *window on a theme* that highlights diverse issues and initiatives in the respective region, sometimes through interviews with experts and activists. One such window presents the current state of the opposition to the planned Alemagna motorway across the Alps in East Tyrol, another reports on the path of the South Tyrolean community of Mals towards becoming the first pesticide-free region in Europe. Or take the state of affairs on the planned UNESCO World Heritage Site Mont Blanc, the failed plans to create the Swiss Adula National Park, the economic and demographic problems of the Stura Valley or the culture of welcoming refugees in the French Alpine town of Briançon.

In this way the book is much more than the tale of a long-distance walk. It provides ample information on current issues and changes across the Alpine space, such as strong population growth on the one hand and widespread depopulation on the other, severe pressure from tourism and the enormous burden of trans-Alpine and day tripper traffic. Attractive photographs, almost all of them by the author, and an appendix with references and equipment tips for a long-distance walk complete this entertaining book.

In the style of his narrative Siegrist manages to weave adventures, personal impressions, scientific facts, observed problems, negative and positive changes, plus visions for the future, into an informative, entertaining and easy read. Today you will hardly find a book about the Alps that describes the current state of this multi-faceted and exciting region better than Siegrist's *Alpenwanderer*. The blurb on the back cover aptly calls the book *the expression of a great love, a quiet manifest for the Alps as a living and a natural space*. Highly recommended for scientists and non-scientists alike!

Let me conclude with a personal remark: The book would be just as interesting for lovers of the Alps who do not speak German, so a translation into French or Italian would facilitate giving the book the larger audience it deserves and help disseminate it across the Alpine arc.

Günter Köck