

Socio-economic monitoring as basis for the development of a transboundary visitor management concept and fostering of regional economic activities

Maria Hußlein
Jaroslav Červenka
Arne Arnberger
Hemma Preisel
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**Counted – Asked – Observed:
On the Track of National Park Visitors**

Maria Hußlein
Arne Arnberger
Hemma Preisel
Brigitte Alex
Renate Eder

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| Socio-economic Monitoring

Socio-economic questions

- Effects of the interactions humans – nature
- Effects of the interactions protected area – local actors
- Valorisation of ecosystem services

„A comprehensive monitoring has to integrate conservation, economic and socio-cultural aspects into the landscape-ecological context.“
(Kowatsch et al., 2011)

„The major issue, however, is how to manage this use effectively in ways that protect park, provide for satisfactory visitor experiences, and create a constituency of supporters for parks.“
(Dearden und Rollins, 2009)

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| Visitor data as a planning guide

The survey of visitor numbers and their characteristics is necessary for a sustainable and professional management of protected areas.

- **Visitor monitoring**
- how much – how often – where – when – why -
- **Evaluating visitor facilities**
- **Evaluating communication**
- **Surveying regional economic effects**

➔ **Designed as long-term monitoring**
small steps and components allow for periodic repetition of surveys

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Why visitor monitoring?

“Collecting recreation management data is costly, and the benefits of better information must be compared to these costs”
(Herfindahl, 1969)

“Poor decisions based on inadequate information also can be costly and can result in irreversible damage”.
(Lucas, 1990)

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Visitor monitoring as basis for planning and management

Management/
regional
economic effects

data

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Visitor data as planning guide

The survey of visitor numbers and their characteristics is necessary for a sustainable and professional management of protection areas.

- Provision and allocation of recreational infrastructure and services
- Identification of specific problem areas and utilizations
- Minimization of conflicts between user groups and nature conservation
- Demonstrating visitor benefits: recreation experience, health...
- Development of marketing strategies
- Identification of trends in demand

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Visitor monitoring is about partnerships

Researchers

Participants

NP administration/rangers

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Visitor/socioeconomic monitoring in the Bavarian Forest National Park

How many
make where
when
what
why?

adapted from Torry C. Daniel 2002

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Visitor/socioeconomic monitoring in the Bavarian Forest National Park

Triangulation

Visitor counting

- Year-round counting
- Counting at selected days

+

Visitor surveys

- Visitor structure
- Spatial behaviour
- Visitor satisfaction
- Recreation experience
- Landscape preferences

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Visitor/socioeconomic monitoring in the Bavarian Forest National Park

Visitor counting: more than 100 access points!

Year-round counting + Counting at selected days

Visitor numbers

time

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Automatic Counters

Visitor counting from April 2013-April 2014

- ✓ Usage of counting devices that allow a long-term registration of visitor numbers and structures
- 15 different counters
 - ✓ Passive infrared („thermal“) sensors
 - ✓ Pressure mats (for walkers)
 - ✓ Pneumatic tubes (for bicyclists)
 - ✓ Inductive loop (for bicyclists)

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Installation of the counting devices

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Questionnaires – Basic survey

4 different questionnaires: locals/tourists and winter/summer

Surveys on 12 days

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Route Analysis

Survey of routes

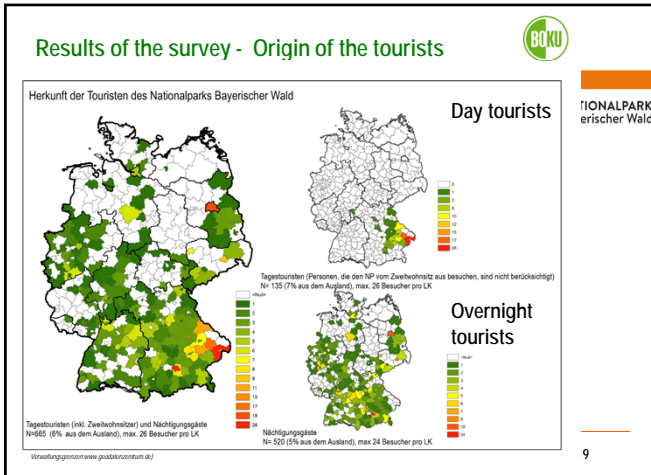
- time/day
- pathway
- activity
- stops

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Results of the survey

- 355 „locals“ (about 1/3)
 - district Freyung-Grafenau (66%)
 - district Regen (34%)
- 627 tourists
 - Single-day guests (22%)
 - Over night staying guests (78%)
- Activity-types: 89% walker, 6% bicyclists, others: joggers, nordic walkers,...

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- ### Results of the survey
- #### Visitor structure
- Sex: 61 % male
 - Group size: Ø 2,4 visitors
 - 14 % with children
 - Arrival: 74 % came by car, 18 % by foot, 8 % by public transport; others: by bike, ...
 - 13 % first time visitors
 - Frequency of visits
 - Locals and single day visitors: Ø 95 times during the last year
 - Over night visitors: Ø 16 times
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Results of the survey „What visitors liked“

I liked	Number of mentions
Nature, naturalness, virginity, wood, primeval forest, landscape, „let nature be nature“, nature-experience, mountains (Rachel, Lusen), wilderness, moor, vegetation	670
quietness, not overcrowded, relaxation, recreation, lonesome	230
(hiking)trails, bicycle trails, path-network	150
(good) sights, information sights, information facilities	135
Animals, fenced animal areas, watch animals	130
Infrastructure for visitors, visitor center, attractions (Baumwipfelpfad,...)	53

* Multiple answers possible

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Results of the survey „What visitors did not like“

I disliked ...	Number of mentions
Dead wood: bark beetle	68
Use of designated trails, access limitations, prohibitions, restrictions for bikers	52
Improvement of the signs/wrong signs, to little information/cards, more information at the signs	29
Missing sitting possibilities, missing waste baskets	28
waste, missing forestry management, bad condition of trails	28
too many visitors, too many tourists	26

- there were 3 times more positive than negative statements

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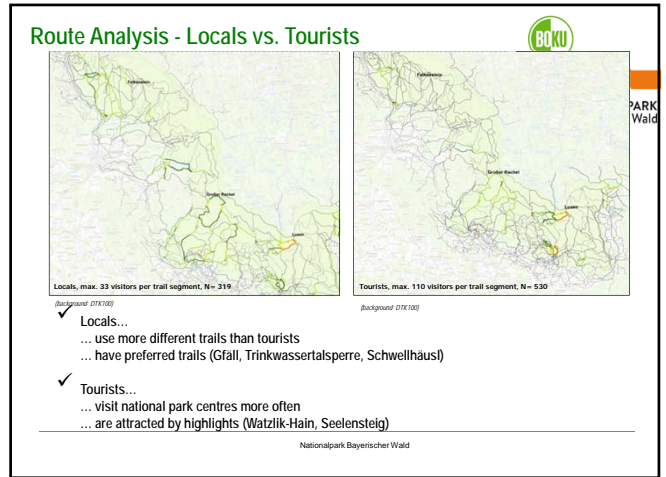
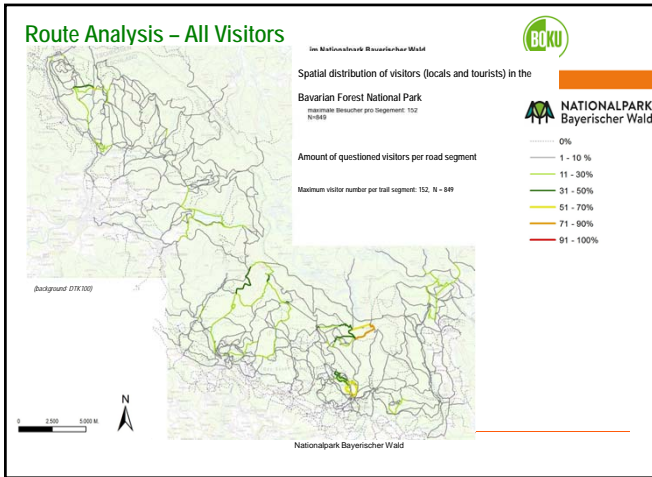
- ### Results of the survey
- 97% knew that they are in a protected area
 - ~ 84% concretely named the label national park
 - For ~ 50% the national park label played a very high or a high role for their visit to the national park
 - 19% would not be there if the national park would not exist
 - For 94% the recreational possibilities are not restricted by the national park, only 1% perceived very strong restrictions
 - 96% are very satisfied or satisfied with their visit to the national park on the survey day
 - More than 90% stated that the amount of visitor facilities and trails in the national park are ideal. 5% it is „too much“, 5% it is „too little“
 - 56% of the tourists will revisit the national park within the next 5 years
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Visitor Satisfaction

...	mean
... with the Bavarian Forest National Park as a recreation area?	1.4
... with the information boards in the national park?	1.5
... with the road signposts in the national park?	1.5
... with the quality of visitor centres in the national park?	1.6
... with the condition of trails in the national park?	1.6
... with the nature conservation management in the national park?	1.7
... with the quality of sanitary installations in the national park?	2.0
... with the public transportation in the national park?	2.1

1.. very satisfied
 5.. not satisfied

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Results of visitor counting

- + Permanent monitoring at 14 sites
- + Counting by human observers at 64 sites on 12 days
- + Parking tickets at the national park centres

Total number of visits (April 2013 - April 2014): 1.3 m visits
At the parking lots of the national park centres: 0.4 m visitors

Permanent monitoring:

- Particularly high visitor numbers: Brechhäuslau, Border Bucina
- Particularly low visitor numbers: Seelensteig, Martinwiese, Grenze Gsenget

→ Identification of long-term counting sites

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Common Project

- InterReg Project – beginning in early 2016
 - Real numbers of visitors, visitor perception, acceptance and their preferences of NP
 - Economic benefit for region
 - Evaluation of infrastructure and programs for public

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