

TEMPERATE PRIMEVAL FORESTS AND THEIR POTENTIAL AND USE FOR RECREATION

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Abstract

Thus far, 166 natural properties have been inscribed on the World Heritage List. There are 96 World Heritage Forests among them. Given the enormous anthropogenic impact on the European continent landscapes, the inscription of the Primeval Beech Forest of the Carpathian (Ukraine and Slovakia) in 2007 has been considered a significant acknowledgement of the natural potentials in the lesser known European regions. However, relatively little is known about these forests' use for forests tourism and recreation. This may be due to the prevailing opinion that it is rather unusual for forests alone to be described as areas of superlative natural phenomena or of aesthetic importance, apart from the tropics. But according to recent studies, aesthetical, cognitive, cultural and scientific appeals of these forest properties have been well documented by now. This provides a key for linking people and place, cultural and natural aspects. Thus, even though the interest in world heritage and otherwise distinguished natural forests is currently rather limited to experts, their use for tourism and recreation linking various natural and cultural aspects may attain further significance, providing the ongoing sensitization of the urban population towards natural values. The paper presents results of the annual monitoring of the numbers of visitors to Dobroč Primeval Forest as a one of the most attractive forest preserves in Slovakia that has been proposed for the inscription on the World Heritage List and awarded the Council of Europe Diploma. The monitoring has been conducted since 1999 by Forests of the Slovak Republic (SR), state owned company, State Nature Conservancy of the SR and Vydra NGO, i. e. the only entities entitled to organize guided walks through the forest. Presented data show that the diploma award, the process of the nomination for inscription onto the World Heritage List and the accompanying events caused a 200–300 % increase in the yearly number of visitors, thus giving rise to a considerable pressure on the ecosystem. Solutions to this problem, e. g. GPS-aided educational and/or interpretative trails in proxy localities, are described.

Key Words

temperate primeval forests, world natural heritage, forest tourism and recreation

Key References

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