

# Moving forward through looking back – Early recreation ecology research in German-speaking Europe

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## Background

Recreation ecology as a scientific discipline could look back on a long tradition of research in Northern America and the United Kingdom. The situation in the German-speaking area of Europe appears to be somewhat different: The impacts of recreation have gained no wide-spread attention within the scientific community, and research from the United States or the United Kingdom was seldom recognized and incorporated in own research approaches. Only in recent years a considerable amount of studies have been published in this field. With the dominant influence of approaches, methods, research findings and conclusions of studies from the U.S. and the UK, the roots of this research field in German-speaking Europe is often forgotten. By identifying early studies on recreation ecology in German-speaking Europe interesting conclusions could be made for future approaches of recreation ecology research.

## Methods

Firstly, the body of literature was systematised with the help of various criteria. These criteria comprised of the ecosystem analysed in the study, the ecological component and the user types who caused the impacts or the activities of these users. Furthermore, the literature was categorised regarding different forms of publications. This categorisation shows that at the beginning of this research field the studies focused mainly either on areas for local recreation or on mountains (e.g. Jacsman 1971, Schulz 1978). Most studies looked at soil or ground vegetation (e.g. Ellenberg 1972, Seibert 1974) and only a few studies on other ecological components like water or wildlife (Reichholf 1975). Before the background of the numbers and the scope of these publications, the development of recreation ecology as a scientific field in German-speaking Europe is outlined.

Secondly, the literature was analysed regarding research design, methods and findings. An aggregation of the publications focuses at the research approaches used as well as the methods applied. These approaches and methods are presented and related to other recreation ecology studies. It is noticeable that the majority of the studies applied qualitative methods. Furthermore the reception of these studies at the time of their publication is discussed. Also the main findings of these studies are presented and evaluated. In doing so it becomes clear that a review of findings in summary is difficult, because within the limited number of publications only a few studies share the same research approach and are therefore comparable. Thus, results from key studies are presented in more detail (e.g. Danz et al. 1978, Czinke et al. 1974, Fritz et al. 1977). The earliest article found which used the literal translation of recreation ecology was published in 1973 (Kaspar 1973).

Thirdly, the literature was used to identify differences in the field of recreation ecology between German-speaking Europe and the United Kingdom as well as the United States. This shows that the key issues within recreation ecology research were somewhat different (e.g. Fritz et al. 1977, Turowski 1972).

## Conclusion

The paper discusses the relevance of approaches, methods and findings from early recreation ecology studies in the German-speaking area for recreation ecology research today. Before this background recommendations for research design in the field of recreation ecology are deduced. Besides, the findings of this paper clarify why research tradition and approaches in Europe differ from them in the United States.

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