

# Climbing management in protected areas of southern Poland

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**Abstract** — Hundreds of rock cliffs and isolated rocks can be found in Southern Poland within upland, mid-mountain or high-mountain landscapes. Most of these sites are, to a various extent, protected by law – within national parks, landscape parks, nature reserves or nature monuments. They are major tourist attractions for visitors of the respective protected areas who generally do not interfere with cliffs ecosystems. This is not the case with climbing activities which remain a subject of an unremitting controversy. This work focuses on the analysis of the climbing management with respect to the assessment of the impact of climbing activities on cliff environment. Polish environmental law does not regulate climbing management, referring it to the competence of protected area managers. However, in the majority of protected areas management consists only in a total closure of some areas to any climbing activities. Trees have been frequently planted in the vicinity of rocks; rock surfaces on which climbing had been curtailed are now overgrown with mosses and herbaceous vegetation, while natural xerophyte and heliophyte communities have been destroyed. Resulting landscape changes largely decreased many geosites' attractiveness not only for climbing but tourism in general. Only recently in some climbing areas trees and shrubs in the vicinity of cliffs have been cleared, however, frequently such actions are not previously consulted with reserve or national park managers. With the growing popularity of this type of qualified tourism, it is necessary to create a modern system of climbing management, based on environmental conservation. Conservation and management plans for protected areas should contain detailed regulations of access to particular geosites where climbing activities are to be allowed. Such regulations may impose seasonal closure of particular cliffs or parts of cliffs to climbing during bird nesting periods or closures due to protection of cliff plant communities. Specified should be the types of permitted climbing activities together with protection method. Finally, monitoring of climbing intensity and environmental impact should be carried out for sustainable tourism development

**Index Terms** — Rock climbing, climbing management, environmental impact, bolts, Southern Poland.



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