

# 13

## Protected Areas

### Introduction

There are a significant number of protected areas in the world today, but their creation has occurred only relatively recently. The designation of protected areas can be linked back to the Romantic Movement in England and continental Europe (Mason, 2016). A related movement in the USA also contributed significantly to the establishment of protected areas there. As indicated in Chapter 3, until the latter part of the 18th century, large areas of the natural landscape were not looked upon as having much potential for human use. So mountain regions, such as the Alps, were viewed as a barrier to communication and transport, and similarly uplands and mountain areas in the UK were viewed as offering little scope for economic use, except possibly sheep farming.

This chapter indicates that the first protected areas were established in the USA, provides a case study of the very first national park, Yellowstone Park, and discusses the issues that can arise when the designation as a park acts as form of marketing and leads to increasing numbers of visitors with the related impacts. The chapter also discusses changing concepts of the term 'wilderness', the implications of this and provides a case study of the largest and most remote wilderness on earth, Antarctica.

### Protected areas

Although for hundreds of years in Europe, wild areas such as mountains and high moorlands were viewed as undesirable places for almost any form of human activity, towards the end of the 1700s, and partly in response to the Industrial Revolution which used large areas of land in towns and generally created an unattractive human/urban landscape, as well as putting pressure on land adjacent to cities, 'natural' landscapes including mountain ranges were being viewed for the probably first time as attractive and the word 'beauty' was being attached to them (Holden, 2013). This was the results of a number of influential writers (for example, Wordsworth and Coleridge in Britain, and Catlin in the USA) who extolled the beauty of such areas as the English Lake District and Yosemite in the USA. For example, Wordsworth's famous poem, 'I wandered lonely as a cloud'

with the lines 'I wandered lonely as a cloud that floats on high o'er vales and hills, when all at once I spied a crowd, a host of golden daffodils' was about Ullswater, a remote lake hemmed in by steep mountains, in the English Lake District.

Within a relatively few years of this change in view on natural and wild areas, there were the first attempts to protect them. By the early 21st century, protecting such landscapes was a common approach in many countries. Hence today, there are many protected areas that have been set up by governments around the world for a number of related reasons. According to Holden (2013) there are several different types, differentiated partly by what they allow and how strict the regulations and laws concerning them are. These are shown in Table 13.1.

In Table 13.1, based on Holden (2016), eight types of protected area are indicated. Those with the most restrictive in terms of use are shown at the top, and then there is a descending order of restrictions on use.

**Table 13.1:** Types of protected areas

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- Scientific reserve/ strict nature reserve
  - National parks
  - Natural monuments/landmarks
  - Managed nature reserve/wildlife sanctuary
  - Protected landscapes
  - Resource reserve
  - Naturally biotic areas/anthropological reserve
  - Multiple use management area/managed resources
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In relation to Table 13.1, in the *scientific reserve/strict nature reserve*, the main aim is to protect the ecological balance for scientific research and also to provide opportunities for environmental education. Commercial activities in such areas would be seriously restricted. *National parks*, which have been set up to protect landscape and scenic values, have similar aims to *scientific reserves*, but have a wider remit as they also include recreational use, whilst *natural monuments/landmarks* have the aim of protecting nationally significant natural features, defined in terms of their especially significant characteristics, or their uniqueness.

A *managed nature reserve/wildlife sanctuary* will involve human intervention to manage some aspects of the landscape or ecosystem. This could involve, for example, the culling of a specific predator to enable a rare/endangered species to survive. *Protected landscapes*, as shown in Table 13.1, are important natural or semi-natural areas where it is recognised that there is a harmonious relationship between humans and the landscape. The emphasis here, however, is on economic viability, as much as landscape protection, and the economic activity in the area is protected.

*Resource reserves* and *naturally biotic areas/anthropological reserves* are in some ways similar to each other, as they are set up in an attempt to protect or sustain resources or areas for future use, by prohibiting certain development activities that threaten them, but to permit ways of life for societies living in harmony with the environment, to continue, without interruption, by modern technology or damaging human activities. *Multiple use management area/managed resources* allow a range of activities to take place, but these should be planned and managed for the sustainable use of, for example, wildlife, forests, timber, water, pasture land and outdoor activities.

Tourism is prohibited in some of these designated areas, allowed in others and is likely to be promoted in a number of them (Mason, 2016). Hence in *scientific reserves*, tourism will usually be prohibited. Tourism will usually be allowed in *national parks* and in many such parks, will be actively promoted (Holden, 2016). This situation will also be the case in relation to *natural monuments/landmark* areas. In *managed nature reserves/wildlife sanctuaries*, tourism may be allowed but not if it is likely to cause disruption or damage to the area. In relation to *protected landscape* designated areas, tourism will often be promoted, but as the emphasis is on ensuring economic viability, tourism must be seen to not come in conflict with other economic activities. Tourism may also be important in *resource reserves* and *biotic reserves*, as well as *multiple use management areas*.

The very first area in the world that was put forward for protected status was Yosemite National Park in the USA. This was in 1864, but it took some time for the status to be confirmed and it was not established until 1872. However, it had the two key aims that remain very important today in such areas, of conserving the landscape and environment, but also allowing visitors to enjoy this landscape. As Holden (2013:276) argues this causes: “dilemmas of how to best deal with the interaction of tourism and conservation in protected areas.”

Holden (2013) considers that national parks are landscapes that have special status. Many of these have been created in relation to national laws, so they may differ from country to country. However, the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) definition is as follows:

*A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long terms conservation of nature, with associated ecosystem services and cultural values (IUCN, 2011).*

Although Yosemite National Park was the first to be put forward for special protected status, it was another US area that can claim to be the very first national park in the world. This is Yellowstone Park, which is located in the state of Wyoming. It has distinct geological features, including geysers, the most famous of which is Old Faithful. It also has wildlife that has traditionally attracted large numbers of tourists, in particular bears. Wolves and wolverine are also animal species that can be seen in Yellowstone Park. Hence it is a combination of unusual geological landscape features, coupled with wildlife that led to the designation as a national park.