



Nature-Based Alternative Tourism in Protected Areas

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Abstract

The demands and needs of people, who have changed with economic, social, and technological developments throughout history, have also been reflected in travel cultures in the 21st century. Changing demands have directed tourism from mass movement to alternative options. The shift of people's orientation towards protected areas, which are rich in natural and cultural resource values and allow alternative tourism types, has revealed the importance of establishing the protection-utilization balance of these areas. In this study, sustainable tourism and alternative tourism issues are discussed and the relationship between protected areas and alternative tourism is explained in line with the literature.

Keywords: Sustainable development, Alternative tourism, Protected area history, Protected areas

Korunan Alanlarda Doğa Temelli Alternatif Turizm

Öz

Tarih boyunca ekonomik, sosyal ve teknolojik gelişmeler ile değişim gösteren insanların istek ve ihtiyaçları 21. yüzyıla gelindiğinde seyahat kültürlerine de yansımıştır. Değişen istekler turizmi kitlesel hareketten alternatif seçeneklere doğru yönlendirmiştir. İnsanların yönelimlerinin doğal ve kültürel kaynak değerleri açısından zengin olan ve alternatif turizm türlerinin yapılmasına olanak sunan korunan alanlara doğru kayması bu alanların koruma-kullanma dengesinin kurulmasının gereğinin önemi ortaya koymuştur. Bu çalışmada sürdürülebilir turizm ve alternatif turizm konuları ele alınarak korunan alanlar ve alternatif turizm arasındaki ilişki literatür doğrultusunda açıklanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sürdürülebilir gelişim, Alternatif turizm, Korunan alan tarihi, Korunan alanlar

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1. Introduction

Billions of years ago, the gas cloud surrounding our planet, the increase in the gas density, which accumulates in the atmosphere, prevented heat loss and made the temperature 33 C° warmer (WWF, 2018) and the adventure of living life began. The role of the human being, who is a part of this delicate balance, has changed over time in this adventure. Since humans are creatures that can exist in relationship with nature by nature, nature and humans are two parts of an inseparable whole that must be together throughout life (Gül, 2013). The historical process of the relationship between man and nature, of course, shows that there are changes in the way people perceive it. Nature which was an instructive being before becomes a resource to be exploited over time. From the time the first hunters/gatherers were shaping their life according to geographical, climatic, etc. to the present day, it is possible to see that there has been a dramatic change in the way of life of humanity. People first started to live in communities with the agricultural revolution and developed their skills over time, and by the 20th century, they started to change their habits and lifestyles by realizing the industrial revolution. The technological advances experienced with the industrial revolution have led to the development and growth of cities and the concentration of the world population in the cities.

Until the year the 2000s, cities with various economic, social, and educational opportunities faced various problems such as excessive demand and migration, and after these years, people started to feel the longing for nature and natural areas by complaining about their living conditions (Dinç, 2019). This deficiency experienced by people has caused the travel preferences to change, and the preferences to shift from mass tourism to alternative tourism forms and natural areas. Nature-based tourism, which is a sub-type of alternative tourism, and outdoor recreation activities such as hiking and mountain biking have gained increasing popularity in recent years with this changing demand (Balmford et al., 2009; Eagles, 2014; Ballantyne & Pickering, 2015; Lee et al., 2020; Gül & Kurdoğlu, 2021; Gül & Metin, 2021).

The areas that attract the most attention for outdoor recreation activities and nature-based tourism are undoubtedly protected areas. National parks, which are one of the protected area classes, are defined as "natural parts with national and international rare natural and cultural resource values and protection, recreation, and tourism areas in terms of scientific and aesthetics" according to the National Parks Law No. 2873 (TC Resmi Gazete, 1983). The orientation towards protected areas and national parks has increased the creation of recreational trails in these areas (Marion & Leung, 2001; Marion & Leung, 2004; Cole 2004; Ballantyne & Pickering, 2015). These trails are designed to facilitate people's access to points of interest in protected areas and prevent uncontrolled dispersal and minimize human-induced negative impacts on flora, fauna, and water resources (Duffey, 1975; Leung & Marion, 2000; Olive & Marion; 2009; Tomczyk & Ewertowski, 2013).

1.1. Sustainable Development and Alternative Tourism

The basic behavior that activates people is curiosity. This is why they travel from their current location to different locations to see new places and to have new experiences. Tourism is the whole of social, cultural, and economic activities that enable people to travel for personal or commercial purposes (UNWTO, 2020). The places that people prefer to visit the most in the regions they travel to are natural and cultural areas. From this point of view, the explanation of Harrison & Price (1996) that tourism is a service industry whose main source has deep relations with environment and culture is very appropriate (Leslie, 2012).

In the 1970s, the increase in people's incomes and the development of travel vehicles led to the development of existing holiday resorts and the establishment of new holiday destinations. The rapid growths of tourism and unplanned developments have led to serious changes in land use patterns (Budowski, 1976). These changes have caused the development of tourism to be questioned and the negative effects it has created on the environment to be discussed.

The emergence of the concept of sustainability with the Report of Our Common Future published in 1987 and the emergence of ecological awareness as a result of this report draws attention to the

negative environmental effects of mass tourism (Leslie 2012; Mihalic, 2016). Destructions on natural and cultural resources cause tourism regions to lose their attractiveness. This situation also increases the demand for change by people, and a new quest leads to an alternative tourism understanding that is opposed to mass tourism. The searches for alternative tourism and the necessity of including the goal of sustainable development in the tourism industry have revealed the concept of sustainable tourism (Erdoğan, 2003). Sustainable tourism is the management of natural resources, taking into account the needs of local communities while meeting the expectations of tourists (Pratt et al., 2011). According to Weaver (1999), tourism is divided into two as sustainable and unsustainable tourism (Figure 1). But he argues that there is no clear distinction between them. Even if tourism includes sustainable activities, it will have an impact on the area where it is made. The important point here is that sustainable tourism aims to minimize these effects and to aim at management forms that can prevent possible problems.

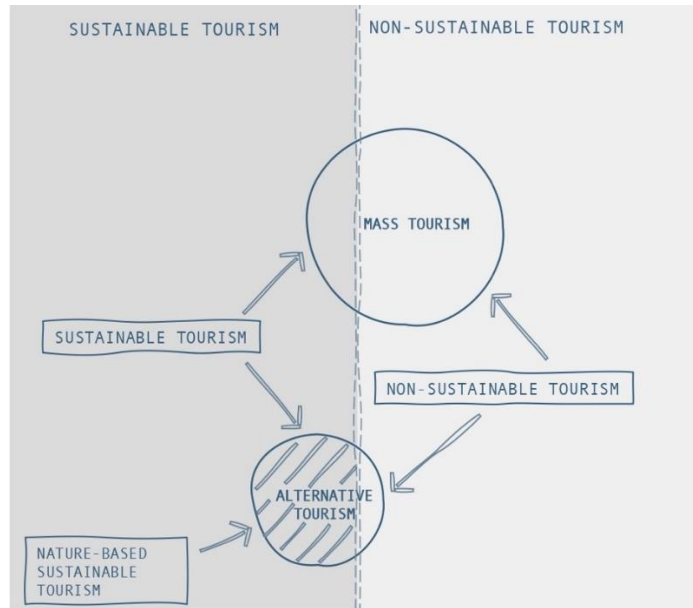


Figure 1. The relationship between sustainability and tourism (Weaver, 1999)

Alternative tourism is a type of tourism that allows experiencing natural areas and cultural activities in the visited region as an alternative to mass tourism, which we call the sea, sand, sun, and city tour (Erdoğan, 2003). Considering Figure 1, it should be emphasized that not every type of alternative tourism can be sustainable, and that only alternative tourism types based on sustainable principles will be sustainable tourism. As indicated in Figure 1, for alternative tourism to be sustainable, it must be associated with sustainable practices. In this case, nature-based alternative tourism types, which are expressed as shaded on the sustainable side of Figure 1, can be considered sustainable tourism. Based on the studies of Newsome, Moore, and Dowling (2012) and Hill and Gale (2009), nature-based alternative tourism types are indicated in Figure 2.

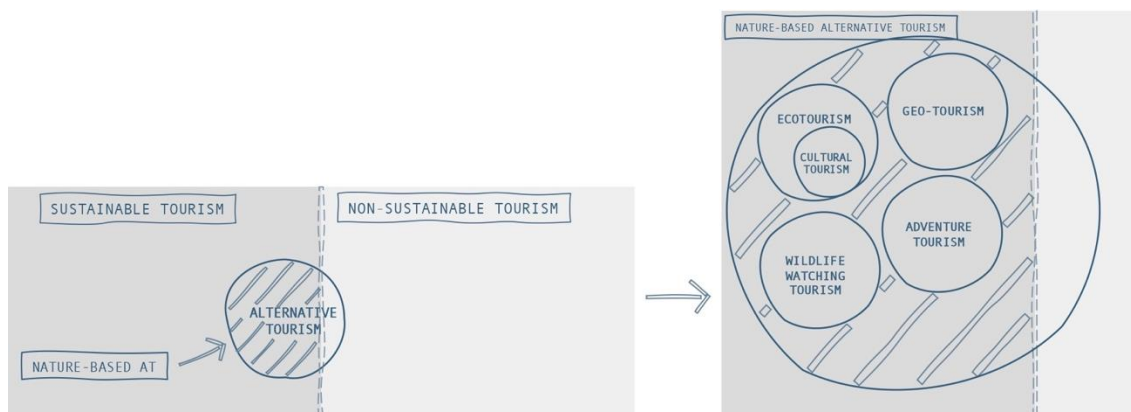


Figure 2. Nature-based alternative tourism types

1.2. Nature-Based Alternative Tourism

Newsome et al. (2002), nature-based tourism is a type of tourism based on natural areas, in which protection and education programs are taken into account while doing adventure, wildlife, natural landscape, and ecotourism activities (Dwyer, 2014).

Nature-based tourism with a general expression is a type of tourism that includes outdoor activities related to nature (Dwyer, 2014). Buckley, (2011) is divided the outdoor recreation activities into three; consumptive, adventure, and non-consumption / nature-based (no consumptive) (Newsome et al., 2012). Consumer (consumptive) outdoor tourism includes recreational hunting and fishing, adventure tourism is excitement-focused and outdoor activities, non-consumptive / non-consumptive nature-based tourism includes animal/plant observation and activities focused on enjoying nature (Buckley, 2008). 2011; Newsome et al., 2012).

According to Dowling (2001), nature-based tourism includes activities related to the abiotic, biotic, and cultural characteristics of the environment (Table 1). E.g; Abiotic components of the environment, such as various geological formations, waterfalls, glacial lakes, encourage geo-tourism activities focused on the natural landscape, biotic components such as wildlife and vegetation, activities that involve observation, local architecture, and traditional activities encourage activities focused on the cultural components of the environment.

Table 1. Environmental components focused on nature-based alternative tourism types

Nature Based Alternative Tourism Types	Environmental Components		
	Abiotic	Biotic	Culture
Ecotourism			
Adventure Tourism			
Wildlife Watching Tourism			
Geotourism			

Huybers & Bennet (2002) emphasize that the quality of the natural landscape and environment will be directly proportional to the quality of visitors' experiences (Blanco, 2011; Dwyer, 2014). The desire of people to experience and appreciate these “unspoiled” areas forms the basis of nature-based tourism. For this reason, it is essential to protect natural areas to maintain their attractiveness. Nature-based tourism takes into account the principles of sustainability and promotes responsible tourism to protect and maintain natural areas. The basic principles of responsible tourism were first defined by Hetzer in 1965. These;

- Keeping environmental impacts to a minimum
- Respect the local culture
- Maximizing the benefits that can be provided to the local people
- To maximize tourist satisfaction (Blamey, 2001).

1.2.1. Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a nature-based tourism type that includes environmental education and sustainable management models (Blamey, 2001). Many definitions of ecotourism have been made so far, and when the definitions are examined, it has been determined that all definitions commonly refer to conservation, education, and local participation in ecotourism (Erdogan & Erdogan, 2005; Erdogan, 2010). According to Weaver (2008), ecotourism has five basic features. These;

- Ecotourism is a form of tourism.
- The sites visited are primarily nature-based but should also include cultural resources when requested.

- It should support education and training.
- It should contribute to environmental and socio-cultural sustainability.
- It must be economically sustainable.

Again, according to Newsome et al. (2012), ecotourism is divided into five categories: nature-based, ecologically sustainable, environmentally educational, beneficial to the local community, and tourist satisfaction. In this case, briefly explaining these five categories will contribute to a better understanding of the concept of ecotourism. Ecotourism focuses on the biotic, abiotic, and cultural characteristics of the environment, that is, nature needs itself. For this reason, the correct planning, development, and management of ecotourism are extremely important for the protection of natural areas and natural resources. This means that the activities to be carried out must respect and not harm the environment and the culture of the region. The most basic feature that distinguishes ecotourism from other nature-based tourism types is that it is educational. The environmental education that visitors receive from nature experiences affects the formation or increase of awareness of the person, thus taking tangible actions for protection. Including local producers and services in the ecotourism program contributes both to the development of local communities and to increasing the quality of experience of visitors. Meeting the expectations of the visitors from their experiences and their satisfaction is the basis of the sustainability of tourism. The issue that should not be forgotten here is that the protection and sustainability of natural resources should come before the satisfaction of tourists.

1.2.2. Adventure Tourism

According to Quinn (1990), human passion to experience hidden or unknown things triggers adventure. The adventure seeker sets out to discover something hidden and unknown. In this case, adventure is directly related to exploration (Weber, 2001). Adventure tourism, as described by Hall & Weiler (1992), is an outdoor tourism activity where the participant of the experience is affected by the environment and management, in a natural environment that contains unknown (risk) elements, far from the place where the person lives (Weber, 2001; Gülcan, 2004).

For humans, mountains, lakes, forests (abiotic components), and wildlife habitats (biotic components) represent places of escape that offer excitement and adventure (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). The main reasons for the increase in the interest in adventure tourism in recent years are that people escape from the monotonous city life and seek self, insight, and knowledge (Gyimothy & Mukletun, 2004). In this whole journey of self-discovery, people fleeing from the urban environment discover their own identity by re-evaluating their limits and social status by forcing their physical and sensory skills in the unknown nature (especially in the mountains) (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). In this context, it would be a shallow definition to define adventure tourism only as of the pursuit of risk and uncertainty. On the contrary, adventure tourism is an action that offers various opportunities to experience nature, which is a part of the personal development process of people (Walle, 1997; Gyimothy & Mukletun, 2004).

1.2.3. Wildlife Watching Tourism

Wildlife viewing tourism is a sub-type of non-consumptive nature-based tourism based on the experience of watching plant and animal communities in their natural environment. It should be especially noted that it is useful to distinguish between wildlife tourism and wildlife watching tourism. Wildlife tourism, which includes recreational activities such as hunting and fishing, is a type of consumer tourism. However, wildlife watching tourism includes only observational experiences (Tapper, 2006). There is no hunting for nutritional or sportive purposes and consumption of plant and animal communities here.

Wildlife monitoring tourism carries out its activities in undisturbed natural areas and protected areas for its purpose. The increasing demand on a global scale in recent years has led to concerns about the pressures that may occur in such areas. The main risk factors threaten natural life; disease, climate change, poaching, and smuggling (UNWTO, 2015). It is possible to keep the pressures that

may occur at the lowest level with properly planned sustainable management models. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that wildlife watching tourism can create negative effects on biodiversity, as well as contribute to raising awareness of people (Curtin & Kragh, 2014). Observing and witnessing the wildlife on-site enables people to internalize it by establishing emotional bonds. The awareness that not only humanity but also all living things need existing resources reflects on people's behaviors and enables them to support their conservation activities.

1.2.4. Geo-tourism

Our world has undergone geodynamic processes since its existence and is constantly evolving and changing (Çiftçi & Güngör, 2016). We can obtain information about the processes from the formation of the Earth to the present with the help of minerals, rocks, and fossils found in rocks (Güngör, 2012). People who are interested in the formation of the earth and the changes that have taken place over time have wanted to know and understand the earth by making use of branches of science such as archaeology and paleontology (Güngör, 2012; Çiftçi & Güngör, 2016). Geo-tourism is a type of nature-based tourism that focuses on geological components such as rocks, minerals, fossils, and geo-morphological processes on the earth (Newsome et al., 2012). Geo-tourism is based on three basic principles: geologically based, sustainable and educational (Dowling, 2013). Geo-tourism helps people interact with local people and develop the local economy while examining geological features. According to Dowling 2009, creating employment for the local people with the right management forms allows the promotion of geotourism (Newsome et al., 2012). Geotourism contributes to the conservation of geological heritage while promoting the creation of favorable conditions for tourism development (Newsome et al., 2012; Dowling, 2013; Gordon, 2018; Ólafsdóttir, 2019).

1.3. Nature-Based Alternative Tourism and Protected Area Relationship

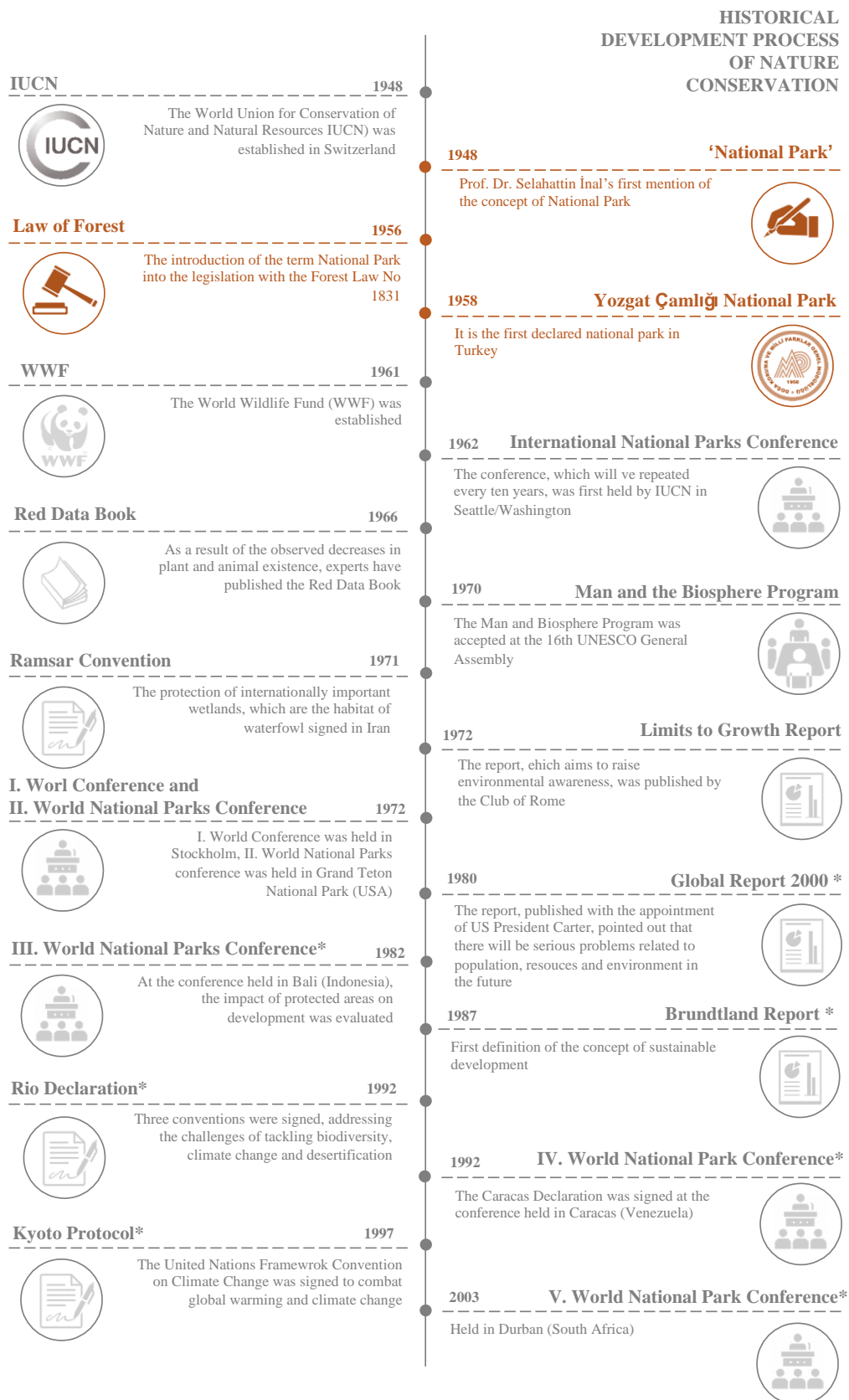
1.3.1. A brief history of protected areas

According to the IUCN (2002) report, protected areas are cultural artifacts, and the history of nature conservation is based on the idea of protecting special places centuries ago. The first examples of protected areas are special areas reserved for requirements such as sanctuaries and hunting reserves (Kurdoğlu, 2007). When the historical process of nature conservation is examined, the process that started with the protection of the areas or sanctuaries allocated to them by various emperors and feudal lords continued with the opening of these areas to the use of the public. The declaration of Yellowstone as a national park and the increasing number of protected areas created the need for the establishment of a management structure. The establishment of management structures has led to the realization of various activities by establishing various organizations and institutions to protect natural resources and ensure their sustainability. The detailed chronological order of the protected area history, which has developed quite a bit until today, is briefly summarized in Figure 6, since there are many sources on the subject and it is not wanted to be repeated (Demirel, 2005; Yücel & Babuş, 2005; Kurdoğlu, 2007; Düzgüneş, 2015; Yeşil, 2016). Events with orange color in the figure represent developments in Turkey, events with * signify developments both in the world and in Turkey.



Figure 3. The historical development process of nature conservation

Continuation of Figure 3



1.3.2. Protected Area Categories

Protected areas according to the current definition made by IUCN in 2008; “A clearly defined geographical area that is recognized, allocated and managed, by legal or other effective means, to ensure the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”. For the protected areas to be planned and managed correctly, it is extremely important to determine which protection status these areas will have and what kind of protection form will be applied (Özkaya, 2015). In 1994, the importance of having an internationally determined standard for a clearer understanding of the purposes of protected areas and promoting awareness was emphasized and the international protected area classification system prepared by IUCN was accepted. According to this system, six management classes (Table 2) and their management objectives matrix (Table 3), whose protection purpose and priorities have been determined, are defined. These are Strict Conservation/Wildlife Areas, National Park, Natural Monument, Habitat and Species Management Areas, Landscape (Land/Marine) Protected Areas, and Managed Resource Conservation Areas (IUCN, 1994).

Table 2. IUCN protected area classification system (IUCN, 2008)

Category	Explanation
I	Ia Strict Protected Area: Protected areas managed for scientific studies.
	Ib Wildlife Area: Protected areas managed to protect wildlife.
II	National Park: Protected areas managed for ecosystem conservation and recreation.
III	Natural Monument: Areas managed to preserve certain natural features.
IV	Habitat and Species Management Area: Areas requiring management intervention for habitat and species conservation.
V	Landscape (Land/Marine) Conservation Area: Protected areas managed for landscape protection and recreation
VI	Managed Resource Conservation Area: Managed areas for sustainable use of natural ecosystems

Table 3. IUCN protected area management objectives matrix (IUCN, 2008).

Management Goal	Ia	Ib	II	III	IV	V	VI
<i>Scientific research</i>	1	3	2	2	2	2	3
<i>Wildlife conservation</i>	2	1	2	3	3	-	2
<i>Conservation of biodiversity</i>	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
<i>Maintenance of environmental services</i>	2	1	1	-	1	2	1
<i>Preservation of certain natural/cultural features</i>	-	-	2	1	3	1	3
<i>Tourism and recreation</i>	-	2	1	1	3	1	3
<i>Training</i>	-	-	2	2	2	2	3
<i>Sustainable use of natural ecosystem resources</i>	-	3	3	-	2	2	1
<i>Preservation of cultural/traditional qualities</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1	2

1: Primary target, 2: Secondary target, 3: Possible applicable target, -: Not applicable

Two different categories are not included in the IUCN classification but are in the status of our country. These are Special Environmental Protection Area and Natural Protected Areas. Again, they are not included in the IUCN categories, but there are international protection statuses determined by the international conventions that Turkey has signed. These; World Heritage Sites (Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage-UNESCO), Biosphere Reserves (Man and Biosphere Program (MAP)- UNESCO), Emerald Net Areas (Convention on the Protection of Wildlife

and Habitats), Special Environmental Protection Areas (Barcelona Convention) and Ramsar Sites (Ramsar Convention) (Albayrak, 2010; Özkaya, 2015).

1.3.3. Benefits and risks of nature-based tourism in protected areas

Nature-based tourism has benefits such as creating economic resources in protected areas, supporting the protection of the region, and increasing the quality of life of the local community. Although the establishment of nature-based tourism activities in protected areas may seem costly at first, they can create a serious income source in the long run. If it is planned correctly, the incomes obtained from conservation can be much higher than other land use incomes such as agriculture and animal farming. Demonstrating the economic value that the protected areas can bring to the country or region where they are located ensures the creation of public and political support for the protection of natural and cultural heritage. In addition, the demand for authentic experiences by visitors encourages local people to maintain their traditions, festivals, and cultural events. Experiencing protected areas contributes to the volunteering of visitors for conservation and to provide the income needed for the maintenance and repair of the area. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that if tourism activities in protected areas are not managed correctly, they may have negative environmental, financial and socio-cultural effects. The increase in the demand for protected areas and the increase in the number of visitors may increase the costs of services to be provided, which may increase the tax burden on the local people and cause a decrease in the income of the people. The increase in the number of visitors and the income difference between the visitors and the local people may lead to the deterioration of social activities and the loss of cultural values. Since nature-based tourism activities are carried out in areas that are already sensitive, even with the best management method, it will cause environmental effects. It is extremely important to determine to what extent the said effect will be accepted or not, to make an accurate comparison between the effects of the changes to be made in the use of the land, and to take precautions by clearly determining the environmental risks (IUCN, 2008). Table 4 lists the benefits of nature-based tourism to protected areas and the risks it may pose in these areas.

Table 4. Potential benefits and risks of nature-based tourism in protected areas (IUCN;2008)

BENEFITS OF NATURE-BASED TOURISM	ECONOMIC	It contributes to the diversification of local tourism businesses and the revival of the local economy.
		It encourages the domestic production of goods.
		It creates employment for local people.
		Generates financial resources for protected areas and local people.
	PROTECTION	It provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of natural and cultural heritage through education or experience of the area, thus creating responsible consumers.
		It supports biodiversity and the conservation of ecological processes.
		It encourages the development of good management systems and environmental practices to control the functioning of tourism activities.
	SOCIAL	Supports environmental education for visitors and locals
		It encourages local people to value their culture and environment.
		By developing new and different activities, it contributes to the creation of interesting environments not only for visitors but also for the people of the region.
		It helps to increase the welfare level of the people of the region.
	RISKS OF NATURE-BASED TOURISM	ECONOMIC
The increase in the number of visitors causes an increase in service costs.		
The increase in costs leads to an increase in the tax burden on the local people.		
Acquisition of local businesses with reduced income by foreign capital.		
SOCIAL		Income not contributing to society, with touristic expenditures leaking out of the local area.
		The increasing number of visitors may cause deterioration in the social structure.
		Failure to establish good management plans can result in not meeting community needs.
		Loss of authenticity of local traditions
		Exploitation by ignoring the wishes of local people.

ENVIRONMENTAL	Destruction of vegetation and wildlife for the construction of tourism facilities.
	The dumping of rubbish on the site by visitors.
	Soil compaction or erosion in frequently used areas.
	Observing changes in the behavior of wildlife.
	Damage to the existing habitat by visitors or organisms coming from outside to the area by different means.

2. Conclusion

Since the discovery of agriculture, people started to use natural resources, and this use turned into exploitation over time. The population, especially concentrated in urban areas, has caused cities to be exposed to serious anthropogenic pressures. Although people migrated to cities for purposes such as increasing the level of welfare, most people did not feel like they belonged to the city. The main reason for this is that man is an entity that finds life in nature, shapes his life with the effect of natural conditions, and can exist in a relationship with nature even if he does not want to (Gül, 2013). Even though the people who migrated from the rural areas to the cities tried to adapt, they felt the lack of their weakening relationship with nature. Even for people who were born and raised in the city, the occupation of the green areas that exist with urbanization and the deterioration of the natural structure of the city caused the human-city relationship to be damaged and the sense of belonging weakened. It is seen that leisure and recreation activities of people who feel this deprivation more in time tend to nature and natural areas. Kurdoğlu (2008) reports that the demand for areas rich in natural and cultural resource values for tourism and various recreational activities is increasing gradually. The continuation of these activities depends on the protection of existing ecosystems, biological diversity, and cultural heritage (Kurdoğlu, 2001).

While these resources are open to human use, it is extremely important to give priority to the protection and continuity of these resources. For this reason, there is a need for management plans to ensure sustainable use in areas rich in resource value. For these plans to be prepared correctly, first of all, resource inventory and analysis of the study area should be made by teams of experts such as geologists, biologists, forest engineers, landscape architects, surveyors, and sociologists. Being able to determine the current values correctly is the cornerstone of the planning and management of the area. Another issue that should not be ignored is participation. While the studies are being carried out, it is necessary to consider the expectations and interests of the local people living in the area and the visitors coming to the area and to be included in all stages of the program from planning and implementation. These types of practices enable the local people to play an active role in increasing the level of welfare and commitment to the area and therefore in protecting the existing values. This satisfaction of the locals directly affects the service to be provided in the area and satisfies the expectations of the visitors whose main purpose is to experience the natural and local life.

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Author Contribution and Conflict of Interest Disclosure Information

All authors contributed equally to the article.

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