

Community awareness of Geopark Harz-Braunschweiger Land-Ostfalen

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Geoparks, like many other federal, state/provincial, or local parks, often suffer from a lack of identity. When visitors do not know they are visiting a Geopark it is nearly impossible to educate them about the region and its offerings to the community. This study sought to understand awareness of the Geopark Harz-Braunschweiger Land-Ostfalen, located in north-central Germany as part of a larger study of visitors at the Harz National Park. The first question asked if the visitors were aware that the Harz National Park was a part of the Geopark. The majority (60%) indicated they were aware that the Harz National Park was a part of the Geopark. A follow-up question asked when the respondent had learned about the Geopark. Over half (57%) of the respondents had known about the Geopark for more than one year, one-third (33%) had known about the Geopark for less than one year, and just 10% learned about the Geopark on this trip. Finally, a question about the visibility Geopark information within the Harz National Park visitor center was asked. The vast majority of the respondents (82%) who went to the visitor center had seen the Geopark information. The discussion will focus on understanding what methods the Geopark used to ensure visitors were aware of the Geopark, how they interacted and communicated with the Harz National Park management, and suggestions for increasing awareness of Geoparks. Findings from many previous research efforts suggest awareness of a park (and this case the Geopark) can help increase stewardship of the area, as well as a concern for the environmental and financial health of the organization managing the park. Our discussion will include implications for managers who may want to increase awareness to support these and other causes that may be important to managers.

Presented in Theme 2