

# **Understanding recreational landscapes**

Developing a knowledge base on outdoor recreation  
monitoring in Swedish coastal and marine areas

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## ABSTRACT

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This PhD thesis concerns the role and importance of outdoor recreation monitoring in the management of coastal and marine areas in Sweden – a topic that in spite its importance has eluded attention, both in research circles and in area management. To address this situation, the objective of the thesis is to develop a knowledge base on outdoor recreation monitoring in coastal and marine areas, with special attention given to current research knowledge on the topic as well as monitoring practices and needs on a management level. This requires both a theoretical and methodological anchoring of the work with outdoor recreation monitoring, which in the thesis is done by giving attention to central geographic landscape theory as well as an applied research approach.

The theoretical contribution in the thesis involves a broader perspective on outdoor recreation monitoring, which is needed in order to work professionally with outdoor recreation in the management of coastal and marine areas. Specifically, this means looking into the importance of monitoring not only environmental processes, but also human relations and experiences in coastal and marine areas. To better understand this, an integrated landscape understanding grounded within a combination of geographic landscape theory and a Nordic landscape perspective is introduced with a specific emphasis on the importance of actively monitoring not only with material, but particularly also immaterial landscape qualities in recreational area contexts. The methodological contribution in the thesis involves exploration of important challenges, needs and improvements in the work with outdoor recreation monitoring in coastal and marine areas. Three quantitative methods (i.e. a questionnaire survey, an interview survey and a combination of on-site and roaming observations) and a qualitative method (i.e. a picture based study) are applied and evaluated in a coastal and marine area context. The thesis reveals important challenges in obtaining representativity of monitoring results in coastal and marine areas due their open landscape character, weather conditions as well as high levels of user dispersion. The thesis therefore suggests that more attention is given to the importance of data triangulation as well as knowledge about limitations of each applied monitoring method. In terms of important needs, the thesis emphasizes the importance of monitoring experience qualities in coastal and marine areas. The thesis therefore suggests the introduction of ‘visitor produced pictures’ as a method strategy to effectively obtain this knowledge. Finally, the thesis also discusses and suggests the development of new monitoring methods and strategies based on new technology in order to effectively acquire user information in coastal and marine areas (e.g. online media platforms, smartphone detection and drone technology). The introduction of new technology is interesting as it not only offers new options to address identified monitoring challenges and needs, but also presents new opportunities in terms of developing efficient methods for monitoring outdoor recreation in coastal and marine areas.

**Keywords:** outdoor recreation monitoring, outdoor recreation management, outdoor recreation, coastal and marine areas, quantitative methods, qualitative methods, landscapes, Sweden

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