

Changes in Vegetation Structure along Four Tourist Trails from Kasprowy Wierch, Tatra Mountains

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Abstract: In this paper there is a new method to assess tourist impact on vegetation cover presented and tested in four locations, which have a different tourist traffic magnitude. Research area is Kasprowy Wierch surroundings in Tatra Mountains. It is a specific place in Tatra Mts., because it can be reached either by cable car or five tourist trails, being the most visited summit in the Polish Carpathians. Each year, there are about 500 thousand people reaching Kasprowy Wierch with a cable car and thousands of walking people. High tourist impact causes many vegetation injuries. Methods used in this research is based on average daily and monthly magnitude of tourist traffic and geobotanical method, which based on a plant species registration and its' surface coverage estimation using Daubenmeir scale. The results attest that some species are resistant to the pressure and other not. In this regard, the species composition and species percentage can be suitable indicator to measure vegetation changes due to the tourist impact.

Key words: *tourist impact, Tatra Mountains, vegetation damage*

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