

We are sympathetic to nature. From an early age, we listen to stories about it, go for walks in the forest and admire the animals we meet. We rest by lakes, rivers and the sea, we go hiking in the mountains. The natural sciences can explain why natural ecosystems are valuable. To use modern scientific language, it can be said that they provide three types of services (in the scientific language of ecosystem services): regulatory, provisioning and cultural. The former enable the environment to which we are adapted, and thus the specific composition of the atmosphere, ambient temperature, water circulation, soil formation, etc. The latter involve the provision of food and raw materials - such as crops or wood - that affect our material well-being. The third consists of the well-known recreational benefits and positive effects on human health, but also the less tangible ones related to facilitating the development of science and culture.

In recent years, significant progress has been made in understanding how ecosystems provide "services" and how this translates into benefits for humans. In fact, however, it is difficult to move from general statements about the great benefits that nature provides to humans to reliable estimates of the value of ecosystem services and put them into practice. All these services translate into human well-being and should be taken into account in the management of natural resources. Unfortunately, practice shows that this is often not the case and some of these services are given priority before others. It turns out that ecosystem services that are traded (e.g. agricultural production, timber and other natural goods that can be sold) are treated as more important than others.

Ecosystem services provided by nature are largely non-market goods. However, according to modern economics, they have value because they satisfy (directly or indirectly) the needs of people. In this sense, their value is as real as that attributed to typical market goods. Contemporary economics has developed a number of methods to estimate the value of non-market goods. The main goal of this project is to estimate cultural benefits (i.e. value of recreation and health benefits and landscape amenities) that nature provides to the Polish citizen, as well as to thoroughly examine the relationship between the characteristics of the natural environment and the benefits that people derive from it. These benefits will be priced and mapped. By accounting for non-market benefits, the main effect of the planned research will be the creation of a tool that will improve the efficiency of natural resources management.