

The Study of Activation on Nature Interpretation for Odae Mountain National Park

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(Manuscript received 28 March, 2005; accepted 10 May, 2005)*

Surveys for visitor's awareness and on-the-spot investigations at Odae Mountain National Park were conducted for activation of nature interpretation. As a result, many problems on observation trails as the object of the nature interpretation were identified. The nature interpretation is not functioning fully for the side of environmental education. The situation and problems of nature interpretation were analyzed in depth based on the survey of the visitors. In order to improve roles of the nature observation trails and solve the present problems immediately, suggestions are as the followings.

- 1) Road resurfacing and space development needed to solve the problems of existing nature observation trail.
- 2) Public relations for nature observation trail and production of signboards promoting visitor's interest.
- 3) Development of nature observation trail used only for nature interpretation
- 4) Development of adequate Korean interpretation program based on systematic nature interpretation models from other developed countries

Key Words : Nature Interpretation, Odae Mountain National Park, Nature observation trails, National trail

1. Background and objective of this study

Recently, as the environmental problem increased, many developed countries have built up national conservation policies focused on Biological Diversity Conservation (BDC). The Biological Diversity Conservation means the prevention of living organism extinction and the protection for the loss of wet land and forest. BDC also pursues sustainable use of nature's benefits. More than 190 countries are participating in the Biological Diversity Conservation Treaty today¹⁾.

Korea is also participating in this treaty. The various objections to pursue BDC were written on many policies. Early Korean national parks had entered into the developmental period from 1968 to 1973 after the establishing period from 1962 to 1967. Though the conservation of the Korean national parks was emphasized from 1974 to 1980 like other countries, however, the Korean national parks had re-entered into the developmental period from 1981 to 1988. In the year

from 1987 to 1997, the policies that pursued harmony of conservation and development were attempted with establishment of Korean National Park Authority in 1987. Since 1998, BDC had been emphasized on the focused conservation of natural ecosystem and sustainable utilization²⁾. Many evidences were appeared through 18 times of amendments in natural park law.

Jung (1989)³⁾ described that the visiting purpose of the mountain-type's national parks had been changed from the purpose for simple climbing, group fellowship activity, economic activity using forest resources or tourist amusement (1962-1988) to the purpose for experience of nature such as nature education or nature experience (1989-present). It means that the policy for the mountain-type's national parks from 1962 to 1988 was focused on the development, but the policy from 1989 to the present has been changed for the conservation purpose. Thus, the national park policy aimed at the aspect of conservation. According to this policy, the nature observation trails were established in 17 national parks after environment education and nature friendly program were initiated in Mt. Naejang in 1992 (Table 1). The visitor centers were also established in 6 National Parks after Mt. Jiri inducted visitor center in 1994. The nature interpretation had been

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Table 1. Present state of the national park programs

Program	National Parks
Nature observation trails (17)	Mt. Bukhan, Mt. Chiak, Mt. Chiri, Mt. Deogyu, Mt. Gaya, Mt. Gyeryong, Mt. Juwang, Mt. Naejang, Mt. Odae, Mt. Sobaek, Mt. Songni, Mt. Seorak, Mt. Wolchul, Byeonsanbando, Dadohaehaesang, Hanryoehaesang
Nature interpretations (18)	Mt. Bukhan, Mt. Chiak, Mt. Chiri, Mt. Deogyu, Mt. Gaya, Mt. Gyeryong, Mt. Juwang, Mt. Naejang, Mt. Odae, Mt. Seorak, Mt. Sobaek, Mt. Songni, Mt. Wolchul, Mt. Worak, Byeonsanbando, Dadohaehaesang, Hanryeohaesang, Taean Seashore
Vista centers (6)	Mt. Bukhan, Mt. Chiri, Mt. Gyeryong, Mt. Juwang, Mt. Naejang, Mt. Sorak

conducted in 18 National Parks⁴⁾.

Because the District of Sogeu River in Odae Mountain National Park, which is the subject for this study, had beautiful nature scenery, it was called the little Mt. Geumgang by an ancient scholar, Yulgok Lee and was designated as the Scenic Beauty Number 1 in 1970. However, the nature interpretation in this place was conducted only 6 times from February, 2000 to December, 2004. The signboard was installed more than required numbers. Furthermore, it showed the roles of nature interpretation and nature observation trails against the nature friendly program because of the lack of the place to interpret on nature observation trail, the narrow path as only one person can pass and the eroded road.

In case of USA, the nature interpretation program for protection of the nature and management of the visitor was introduced as one of their major services when National Park Service started in 1916. Freeman Tilden (1883-1980) described the objective or function of interpreter when he published "Interpreting Our Heritage" in 1957. First, the interpretation should be related to visitor's personality or experience; secondly, the informative knowledge and information should be transferred to the visitor by interpretation; thirdly, the interpretation using various knowledge; fourthly, the education effect to induce concern and interest; fifthly, the interpretation that visitors are able to understand overall; lastly, the proper interpretation according to certain age group. Recently, they raised funds for maintaining the visiting trail by the installment of contribution box on the trail⁵⁾. The nature interpretation in Korea is based on interpretation development program by the preparation of tourist guide system⁶⁾. The interpretation was initially started as the part of tourist policy, which was changed to nature interpretation as the importance of nature was

emphasized. In recent studies of the present nature interpretation and nature observation trails, Lee⁷⁾ explained the environment interpretation method such as self-guiding interpretation through the study of applying an effective environmental interpretation program on Korean National Park in 1993. In the study for development of the nature experience program and nature interpretation methodology, Jo et al.⁸⁾ reported the creation and the operation plan for the nature education trails in 9 national parks such as Mount Sorak National Park. The promoting plan for the nature interpretation was discussed at the Nature Interpretation Activation Workshop held by National Park Authority in 2002. However, the previous studies dealt only with overall environment interpretation, not deal with characters about natural condition and cultural resources in each of the national parks. Therefore, the studies for nature interpretation and nature observation trails were required for characterizing natural condition and cultural resources in each of the national parks. The objective of this study is to reconsider the role of nature interpretation in order to develop the improvement method for running the program of nature interpretation trail in the future through analyzing present situation and problems of nature interpretation.

2. Research methods

The survey for the present condition and after-utilizing evaluation on the nature observation trail and nature interpretation program at the District of Sogeu River was conducted. The problems were identified by conducting interview with the person concerned and the survey of distributed questionnaire to 100 visitors. The second parking lot that was the entrance and exit of trail was selected as an investigation site. The investigation was carried out in twice, on 16 and

30 of October, 2004. The contents of the questionnaire consisted of the degree of recognition, the satisfaction on nature observation trail over the interpretation program and the evaluation part of learning degree. The investigation was carried out by personal interview and direct fill in method. The survey was analyzed by excel statistical program.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. The present situation of the nature interpretation at the District of Sogeu River and the nature observation trail

The nature observation trail created in 2000 was 3.3Km long. It took about 2 hours¹⁰⁾. Under the situation of operating affairs in the District of Sogeu River, the nature interpretation was held only 6 times by eco-guider and volunteers from February 2000 to December 2004, despite the outstanding scenery and cultural resources⁴⁾. It was the situation that the nature interpretation in the nature observation trails was not accomplished effectively because the most observation trails were too narrow and overlapped with the national trails, and also because an enough space at the site is not provided for the proper number of visitors, 10 visitors¹¹⁾ in standard number. Only three places, Chunghaksanjang, Yunhaam and Sikdangam, have the sites with an enough space for nature interpretation in the nature observation trails. There are fifty signboards installed in the District of Sogeu River, but these are more than twice of the installment required for standard amount¹¹⁾. Furthermore, the information contained in '2005 Management Plan for Odae Mountain National Park', published by National Park Authority, the signboard information at the District of Sogeu River and the homepage of Odae Mountain National Park over the internet were different. These might induce visitor's confusion and make proper interpretation difficult.

3.2. User's characters

In terms of user's characters about the nature observation trails and national trails, it was showed that 54% of the visitors were male and 46% of the visitors were female. In terms of age group, the proportion of twenties was the highest with 40% and the proportion of teens was the lowest with only 1%. The reason that twenties occupied the highest proportion was due to university students' motivational meeting. In terms

of visiting style, 64% of the visitors were visited with friends or colleagues and only 1% of the visitors were alone.

3.3. User's awareness survey on the nature interpretation

As the result of user's awareness survey on the nature interpretation (Table 2), it was showed that in terms of perception degree, 80% of the visitors did not know¹²⁾ about Nature interpretation which is similar to the results of other National Parks survey. In terms of utilization, only 5% of the visitors already had experienced the nature interpretation. In case of the nature observation trail, 43% of the visitors already recognized it and 15.5% among them had already experienced it. In terms of visiting purpose, 41% of the visitors were for an excursion for viewing autumnal leaves, 31% for mountain climbing, 18% for fellowship, and 9% for learning. The reason that perception and utilization degrees of the nature observation trails or the nature interpretation were showed very low like results above was due to the lack of public relationships by National Park Authority and visiting style of visitors who came only for simple climbing or tour. In case of the signboard, 83% of the visitors recognized that it is usefulness. However, in terms of interesting degree for the signboard (Fig. 1), 46% of visitors were uninteresting, 25% normal and 29% interesting. Thus, the result appeared in the majority of respondents showed negative opinion on the signboard. As previously mentioned, it was analyzed that the excessive number of signboard and incorrect information on the signboards made visitor confused and decreased visitor's interest.

The result of survey on contentment degree after visitors use the nature observation trail at the District of Sogeu River showed that 78% of the visitors

Table 2. User's awareness irradiation

Item	Division	YES	NO
Perception degree of nature interpretation		20%	80%
Utilization degree of nature interpretation		5%	95%
Perception degree of nature observation trails		43%	57%
Utilization degree of nature interpretation		15.5%	84.5%
Perception degree of interpretation boards		83%	17%

N: 100 men

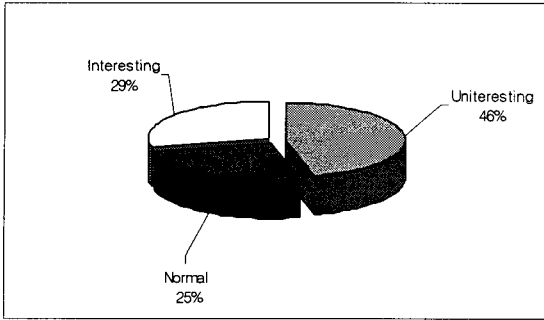


Fig. 1. Interesting degree of the signboard.

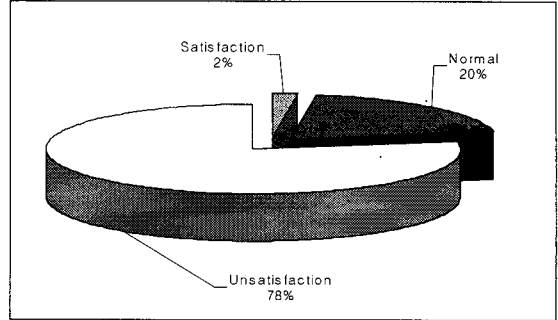


Fig. 2. Contentment degree of the nature observation trails.

expressed unsatisfaction because 30% of the nature observation trails were always crowded, 25% for spoiled trails and 17% for the lack of educational facilities (Fig. 2 and 3). The reason for unsatisfaction of visitors on the nature observation trails is due to the result of crowdedness during the period of excursion for viewing autumnal leaves.

4. Conclusion

Recently, experts in different fields or NGO have been trying to solve the environmental problems over the earth. Therefore, the environment education through the nature interpretation is considered very important and meaningful. As we could understand from this study, however, Odae Mountain National Park has obstacles such as conducting only 6 times of nature interpretation for about 5 years, the narrow trails, eroded road surface, uninterested signboard and the lack of proper place for interpretation and observation trails. The problems were considered fail to meet the contemporary needs. Currently, the outstanding nature environment, cultural resources and stabled ecosystem in the District of Sogum River are being maintained. Therefore, environment education through the nature interpretation is considered more meaningful.

Korea is behind United States of America about 76 years for the side in nature interpretation program. They not only have old history, but also operated nature observation trails and nature interpretation with strict standard. As the model of the nature interpretation, there are such as communication model (Peart & Woods, 1976), Cherem's interpretation model (Cherem, 1977), interpretation plan-procedure model (National Park Service, 1983), Jacobson & Marynowski's interpretation model focused on listeners (Jacobson &

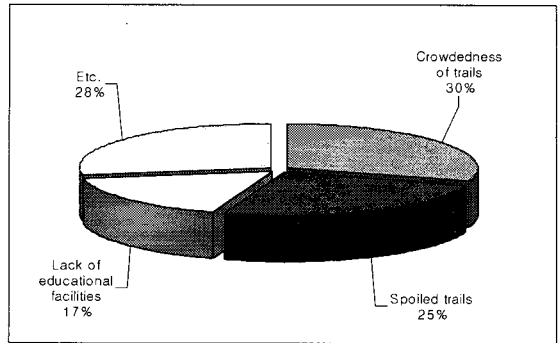


Fig. 3. Other detail subjects.

Marynowski, 1998)¹³). Currently, Korea that has history of National Park for 37 years is needed to induct systematic interpretation models from other developed countries and makes the model fit for the present situation. As previously mentioned, Korea's National Park needed an in-depth analysis to interpret characters of each National Park.

Enos Mills (1870-1922) known as the first nature interpreter noted that the environment interpretation needed to lead to endless interest and to made us to realize nature's principle. On the other hand, an interpreter acts as the role of a mediator to help visitors' understanding of nature. Therefore, it is urgently required to solve the problems that were previously mentioned, and to establish a nature observation trail for nature interpretation instead of just installment of signboards on the existing trail. The following schemes are suggested for the purposes above.

- 1) Road resurfacing and space development were pointed out as the problems of existing nature observation trail.
- 2) Production of signboard promoted interest and Public relations on nature observation trail

3) Development of the nature observation trail is used only for nature interpretation

4) Development of adequate Korean interpretation program is based on the systematic nature interpretation models from other developed countries

Furthermore, it is important to examine interpreter's ability for the environment interpretation, to establish the responsible department for nature interpreters and to design the proper program according to visitor's groups. It must be carried out to promote visitors' understanding on nature interpretation and projecting long-term plans associated with conservation of ecosystem.

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