

# Photos on social media used to measure aesthetic value of Cornish landscape

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A new method designed to measure the aesthetic value of ecosystems has been applied in Cornwall. According to the research findings, Cornwall's beautiful rugged coastline has been measured to have the highest aesthetic value. Researchers at the University of Exeter's Environment and Sustainability Institute developed the method, which uses computational social science to count photos uploaded to an online photo-sharing site.

The researchers found that areas most highly valued for their aesthetic attributes generate hotspots of photographer activity. Areas in which large numbers of people took photographs of the landscape and uploaded them to the site included Kynance Cove, Port Issac, Gwithian Beach, Perranporth and Constantine Bay.

Dr Stefano Casalegno from the University of Exeter said: "The massive amount of data available online, and our capacity to query and analyse it for spatial ecological purposes, has huge and unexplored potential. We explored this specific photo sharing application and found it a very effective method of measuring [aesthetic value](#)."

The value of ecosystems - communities of [living organisms](#) existing with the non-living environment - is often measured in terms of the services that they provide which are beneficial or often essential for humans. These can include providing food, regulating climate and offering spiritual, aesthetic, recreational and cultural benefits.

Previous methods of quantifying the cultural benefits of ecosystems have taken into account the numbers of visitors to an area, the number of [tourist attractions](#), tourist expenditure and the number of days spent fishing. Aesthetic value however has only been mapped using indirect methods. This new method offers a direct way to spatially quantify hotspots of photographer activity and the related aesthetic value of ecosystems. The technique will be used to determine the cultural aesthetic value of [ecosystems](#) as part of wider ecosystem monitoring projects.

Provided by University of Exeter

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