

Natural protected areas. Definition, classification and some examples

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Under the legislation of Romania and management objectives assigned, regarding natural protected areas, natural habitats, wild flora and fauna the following categories are accepted:

- Scientific reserve;
- Natural reserve
- National park;
- Natural park;
- Natural monument;
- Biosphere reserve;
- Wetland of international importance (eg. Ramsar site);
- Natural World Heritage Site.

The total surface of protected areas in Romania, included in Law no. 5/2000 regarding national territory planning for national protected areas is 1.234.710 hectares (5.18 % of the country land). Biosphere reserves, national and natural parks represent an area of 1.132.176 hectares. Together with 134 natural reserves and natural monuments cumulate an total area of 129. 643 ha.

The natural protected area is described as „A clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values” (UNEP-WCMC, 2008).

A particular and important category from the protected areas is the category of national and natural parks which covers a major part from the total protected areas.

These parks can be defined as follows:

National Parks are protected areas with the aim of the protection and conservation of representative samples from biogeographical national area. A national park includes natural elements with special value like: physical-geographical, flora, fauna, hydrological, geological,

paleontological, speleological, pedological, etc. It can be visited for scientific, educational, recreational and tourist purpose. In Romania there are 13 national parks covering an area of approx. 316.000 ha. The oldest national park established in 1935 is Retezat National Park.

Natural parks are protected areas whose goals are the protection and preservation of the landscape where the interaction of human activities and nature over time has created a distinct area with significant landscape and/or culture value, often with high biological diversity.

There are a total number of 15 natural parks in Romania with an area of 562 000 hectares. Cefa Natural Park from Bihor County is the latest natural park established which was founded in 2010.

Retezat National Park

It is the first National Park founded in 1935 on the initiative of Professor Alexandru Borza with the aim of preservation of floral and faunal heritage and specific landscape of high mountains. Retezat National Park is located in the Retezat Mountains in Hunedoara County, Romania. It has an area of 38.138 hectares with altitude between 800 and 2509 m and contains more than 40 peaks over 2200 meters.



Bucura peak, Retezat National Park (© Tudor Predescu)

In the middle of Retezat Mountains is a special protected area called “Gemenele (Twins) Scientific Reserve”. This is the first strictly protected area with scientific character where all type of activities like mining, grazing, hunting, fishing, fruit collection, hiking or camping are entirely forbidden. In this area a number of rare and endemic species of vegetation like virgin and natural beech, mixed beech-fir-spruce and spruce forests, alpine and subalpine shrubs and meadows are protected.

In National Retezat Park there are 1200 species of plants and a high mountain rare fauna like wolves, brown bear, wild boar, Eurasian lynx, European wildcat, chamois, roe deer and red deer. The park also is populated by small carnivore species such as Eurasian badger and Eurasian otter, birds as golden eagle and grouse, different species of fish (trout) and some rare invertebrates.



Rhododendron in Retezat National Park (© Tudor Predescu)

In the park, the research activity is conducted in one laboratory located in “Gemenele Scientific Reserve” near to the “Black lake” and in “Pietrele” and “Rotunda” cottages.

References

UNEP-WCMC, 2008. About Protected Areas, Guidelines for Applying Protected Areas Management Categories, Editor: N., Dudley, IUCN: Switzerland, pp.8-9.