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A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE NATURE PROTECTION IN BULGARIA

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The long history of the Bulgarian nature protection has been divided into four periods: 1) from the ancient times till the end of the Ottoman Rule (1878); 2) till the end of the existing of the Third Bulgarian State (1944); 3) till the end of the people-"democratic" government of the state (1989), and 4) till the joining to the European Union (2007).

The milestones of the conservancy of both, living and non-living nature have been presented and the development of the main subdivisions has been traced chronologically.

The first nursery-garden was created in 1895. The Bulgarian Naturalists' Society was founded in 1896, the first Bulgarian paper on nature conservation appeared in 1919, and the first society for nature preservation, the "Union for the Conservation of the Homeland Nature" was established in 1928.

The first nature reserve ("Silkosiya") was established in 1933, while the first nature park ("Vitosha") in Bulgaria and on the Balkans, was created in 1934. The first law of nature conservation was applied since 1937. The plant species Leontopodium alpinum, Tulipa rhodopea, Gentiana lutea, Taxus baccata, Haberlea rhodopensis, Primula deorum, Aesculus hyppocastanum, and the animal species Gypaetus barbatus, Cygnus olor, C. cygnus, Egretta alba, Cervus elaphus, Rupicapra rupicapra, and some other, were protected by the Bulgarian law since 1937.

In 1963 the first (16) caves have been protected, and the first textbook on the nature conservation has been published in 1964.

The first scientific institution on nature conservation, the Commission for the Protection of Nature, was established at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1956. It was transformed firstly into Institute of Ecology (1989), and into Central Laboratory of General Ecology (1996).

The country's socialist government employed over 100 000 state administrative persons for the organization of the nature conservation, both on the central and local level. During a 20-yer period (1970-1991) a specialized popular monthly journal “Zashtita na prirodata” (“Nature conservation”) came out.

The two-volume Red Data Book of Bulgaria (1984-1985) contains data on 763 species of the higher flora, and 22 species of fishes, 2 amphibians, 12 reptiles, 100 birds, and 18 mammals.


In 1998 410 geosites (107 caves, 73 waterfalls, 65 rocks, 44 rock pyramids, 20 lakes, marshes and limans. 18 rock bridges, 17 dunes, 12 karst valleys and canyons, 12 fossil sites, 9 karst springs, 6 sand (ground) pyramids, 4 rock towers, 4 rock mushrooms, 4 rock columns, 3 other (moraines, volcanoes and mineral sites)) have been protected.


The total share of the protected territories in the last 20 years increased from 1.41 to 3.35 per cent.