

HISTORY OF THE PROTECTED AREAS IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

This paper presents the history of protected areas, efforts made in maintaining biodiversity, the contribution made by foresters and protectionist, prestigious scientists in increasing the percentage of sites protected in our country. The contributions in this area files (natural protected areas) captures period ranging from ancient times (from Dacians) until today.

Key words: *protected natural area, national park, natural park, biodiversity and protected laws*

INTRODUCTION

The problem of the protected areas is more current today than ever. In front of the barbarous offensive against the forests, the main pillar of resistance against environmental degradation, there is just one answer: preservation and conservation as efficiently as possible of our forest patrimony. Despite some unfounded optimistic opinions, Romania is in a bad situation. With just 26% forest areas we cannot ensure a good environmental protection and thus the safety of our country is in real danger. According to the rigorous ecological laws, this purpose can be reached only with at least 35% forested area. How far we are from this desiderate can be seen from the very way in which we are affected with the climactic state of our country. The terrible drought of this year (2012) is an answer to this.

This is why we are pleading for more forests; this is why our struggle against the terrible present drought (2012) is so little efficient.

Given the lack of adequate conditions to increase the afforested areas, we only know two methods of correction: forest belts in the fields and hills and protected areas in the mountains. The protected natural areas are maybe the single efficient method to accomplish this purpose. Consequently, the increase of the afforestation percentage is a must for the future period.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The information was collected from various publications from the country and abroad and was analyzed and synthesized.

In Romania, the idea of nature protection appeared gradually as the forest areas decreased and due to the adverse effects of this process; there

actually are documents which prove the ancient character of this concern, even in the time of the Dacians and Romans. The fenced districts were the place where wood felling, hunting, fishing, grazing and hay mowing were forbidden without the approval of the owner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In Moldova, at the end of the 15th century, the ruler Stefan the Great and Saint imposed a strict regime of administration for the feudal properties belonging to the monasteries, boyars and courtiers. The largest fenced district, Bohotin, was supplying the hay for the ruler's studs. The areas of rare woods were under very severe protection. In case of trespassing the rules were harsh: the trespassers were losing their instruments, clothes and sometimes even the cart and oxen. Upon one ruling, the ruler decided that the culprit seeds 100 walnut trees seedlings instead of a walnut tree he cut without authorisation (Oarcea, 1999).

The chroniclers Ion Neculce and Dimitrie Cantemir mentioned the afforestation made in Moldova by order of the ruler Stefan the Great and Saint, the initiative of environmental protection having deep roots. A moment, with historic documentation, for the first afforestation in Moldova, was the 1497 battle of Stefan against the Polish (King John-Albert of Poland) in Codrii Cosminului. After the victory of the Moldavians, the ruler ordered 10,000 Polish prisoners to plough and seed acorns on the place where today is Dumbrava Roşie. A new forest of oaks appeared here instead of the one which was cut down in order to dress the trees in the cloths of the Moldavian soldiers and thus confuse and confront the Polish army.

According to Oarcea, obvious measures for nature protection in our country appeared with the regulations for forest utilization, by the establishment of a forestry services, regulated even from 1739 in Banat. The first official regulation concerning forest utilization was given by Emperor Joseph the second, in 1871 in Ardeal.

The first Romanian typed forestry code appeared for the first time in Bucovina, in 1786, which includes norms for wood felling and wood maintenance in order to regenerate it, idea for nature protection and forestry arrangement. Similar regulations appeared in Moldova (17920 and Walachia (1793). They legislated the right of property and utilization of the forests and provided forestry recommendations to determine the optimal age for cutting, the need to clean the forest, the ban of grazing and some proposals of afforestation where the land was barren.

After the Adrianopol Treaty (1829), due to soil degradation following the culture of cereal crops, the first royal regulations appear (1842 in Walachia, 1843 in Moldova) which ban cutting the forests,

In 1872 was published the Law for hunting, which legislates the right to hunting and the total ban of hunting some species (ex. *Tetrao urogalus*).

The first forestry code of the independent Romania appeared in 1881, when besides a regulation of the exploitation system, the legal regulation of sparing particular forests irrespective of the owner was introduced, with the purpose to protect the land from erosion and for hydrologic protection (Oarcea, 1999).

The promoter of the first measures of nature protection was the forestry engineer P. Antonescu who, in 1907, after attending the International Congress from Vienna as delegate of the company “Progresul silvic”, showed the necessity of legislated measures for the protection of landscapes and natural monuments.

In 1913, Iuliu Prodan proposed the protection of the plant *Goebelia alopecuroides* from Babadag, Professor Alexandru Popovici proposed the protection of species *Ephedra distachya* of other rare plants, while Grigore Antipa supports the protection of the white egret (*Egretta alba*), taking severe measures to curb the reported cases of mass hunting.

Even from 1920, the “Society for tourism and nature protection” which thereafter became the “Touring-Club of Romania”, aimed to fence some reservations as measure for nature protection (first floristic reservation in Bucegi, the reference point for the establishment of the first national park in Romania).

The first steps for forest protection are taken by the forestry engineers when, upon intervention of the Romanian Society of Naturalists, headed by Professor Popovici-Bâznoșanu, part of the Letea forest in the Danube Delta is put under the special guard of the forestry office. Petre Antonescu published in the first issue of the Forestry Journal a paper on the forests from Letea and Caraorman from the Danube Delta (Giurgiu, 2012).

The actions of Mihail Haret allowed the protection of a century-old forest on Cocota Mountain, with the intention to establish the “first natural park in Romania”. The floristic reservation from Niculițel was established in northern Dobrogea, while a reservation with steppe vegetation and maritime dunes was established at Agigea (by I. Borcea). Similar interventions were implemented for the age-old hayfields from Bosanci and Frumoasa, so that they are preserved for scientific purposes (Peterfi, 1978).

The association “Frăția munteană” was established under the impulse of Professor Emil Racoviță (1922), whose purpose was to protect the natural reservations and the parks.

Thorough actions were taken in 1922-1928 to legislate the protection of nature, both in speech and in writing, by illustrious characters of the time, savants and professors: Emil Racoviță, Alexandru Borza, Andrei Popovici-

Bâznoșanu, Victor Stanciu, Mihail Gușuleac, A. Mühldorf, Emil Pop, Valeriu Pușcariu ș.a.

In 1923 the government approved that the whole Slătioara forest is preserved untouched, as monument of nature, and Al. Borza initiated the first steps to establish the National Park Retezat.

In 1927, after the last Carpathian bearded vulture was shot down at Turnu Roșu, the first law for the preservation of nature was initiated; it was later discussed during the first and single congress of the Romanian naturalists, which took place at Cluj in 1928. The final version, the *Law for the protection of nature* was voted on July 7th, 1930.

On the grounds of this law for the protection of nature, the Commission for the Natural Monuments (CMN) has been established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Domains. Outstanding scientific personalities of the time were members of this commission: A.Popovici-Bîznoșanu-president, E.Racoviță, G. Vîlsan, F. Kepp, Toma Ionescu and N. Săulescu-members.

Until 1945, CMN established 36 natural monuments, among which the National Park Retezat in 1935. The commission made propaganda for the protection of nature by conferences, exhibitions, in the newspapers, issuing the CMN Bulletin (1933-1940) and many scientific papers. The difficulties challenging CMN activity came from the private owners of land who often opposed the establishment of natural monuments on the land in their property.

The first scientific conception about the national parks and about the natural reservations was proposed by the reputed biologist Emil Racoviță, whose guidelines for the definition and classification of the *natural monuments* was published in 1934 and Romanian, and in 1937 in the Memories of the Geographic Society from Paris.

Partisan of the large, as large as possible, reservation, with a *permanent character*, Racoviță insisted on the dominance of the scientific character over the touristic one, which is allowed only in the second area of protection (the buffer area).

In 1934, Racoviță proposed the establishment of another national park which to include the main karst regions of Apuseni Mountains, Padiș-Cetățile Ponorului-Scărișoara up to the valley of Ordăncușii.

After World War Two, the protection of nature was regulated by Decree 237 of October 1950, complemented by HVM 518/1954, by which the monuments are goods of the people with a role of educating the people and having a scientific value. This regulation allowed the executive committees of the People's Councils to take provisional measures to preserve the fauna, flora, fossil deposits, etc. which exist on land proposed

to acquire the legal quality of natural monuments and to stop any works what so ever that might affect the integrity of re reservations.

CMN has 4 under-commissions at Cluj, Iași, Timișoara and Craiova. Its main duty was to review the reservations and to ensure a good protection: contain any negative action (grazing and pouching), moving of closing some limestone quarries, establish integral reservations in the Danube Delta, Bucegi, the Retezat National Park and in some caves, delimitate these reservations using proper markings; biological containment of the invaders; protection of the predating birds etc. The commission has the support of the state institutions interested in matters of nature's protection (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, State Committee for Culture and Art, State Committee for Geology), of the local organs of the state power etc.

The new policy of forest management combines the function of production with the function of protection, coming to the support of nature's preservation. Some forest areas were transferred from the second functional group to the first functional group due to their scientific and landscape importance (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Commission for Natural Monuments).

The Forestry code was adopted, as well as the law of fishing and game, and the law of water protection; the number of reservations increased from 34 in 1944 to 140 in 1970, covering an area of more than 80,000 ha, plus several forestry reservations from group one.

After World War Two, the precarious situation of the forests was improved. Decree 237/1950 is published and thereafter complemented with several other normative papers, and the list of protected plants and animals increased.

An important action initiated by CMN was the census of birds conducted in 1966, actions in which the ornithologists collaborated. Several facilities were built (laboratory-house Gemenele), as well as observation points in Retezat National Park (Gura Zlata, Petrele, Rotunda) and in the Danube Delta (Sf.Gheorghe).

After 1950, several publications on nature's protection were issued: Journal of nature's protection (Romanian Academy), brochures describing the natural reservations throughout Romania, or brochures promoting the protection of the flora and fauna published by the County Councils and of the County People's Councils. Scientific events, conferences and exhibitions were organised, press articles and scientific papers were published, radio broadcasts, documentary pictures were released, all of them addressing mainly the young people.

In 1955, the first sub-commission for natural monuments' protection was established at Cluj, headed by Academician Emil Pop. It was followed

in 1956 by the sub-commission from Iași, headed by lecturer Burduja, by the sub-commission from Timișoara (1958) headed by Professor Dr B. Menkeș, and by the sub-commission from Craiova headed by C.S.Nicolăescu-Plopșor.

Affiliated to UICN, through the Romanian Academy, in 1958, Romania adopted the selective criteria proposed by the International Commission of the National Parks. The most important reservations from Romania, with their characterization, have been included in the UN list of the national parks and equivalent reservations. The area of the reservations included in the UN list is of about 80,000 ha, out of the total 100,000 ha.

“The expansion of Retezat National Park, after the forestry administration of 1964, from 13,000 ha to 20,000 ha, the existence of a material basis consisting of the laboratory-house Gemenele (1780 m altitude) and of 3 observation points, properly equipped for research, established conditions to limit the adverse anthropic factors in the area of protection, the most damaging one being grazing, as well as to develop the scientific research” (Pușcariu, 1973).

In 1965, the number of reservations increased to 130, covering an area of about 75,000 ha, plus many forestry reservations, most of which protected by HCM 518/1954 (Sălăgeanu, 1965). The best known forestry reservations established in 1952-1965, marked on the map drawn by Pop, Sălăgeanu (1965) are: Cetățile Ponorului and Valea Galbenei, Crișul Repede gorges, Pietrele Doamnei, Tinovul Luci and Poiana Stampei, the narcissus fields from Dumbrava Vadului, Dealul cu Melci, Dealul Repedea, Muierii and Cloșani caves. Other sites are: Deva fortress, Snagov forest, Eocene limestone from Porcești-Turnu Roșu, Bazoș and Rădmănești forests.

The implementation of the functional classification, subsequently made official through HCM 114/1954 (Popescu-Zeletin, 1952) placed the protected natural areas in class V, “Forests, natural monuments and reservations”.

After Decree 237/1950 for the protection of the natural monuments, Law 9/1973 for the preservation of the environment, classified the protected natural areas in: national parks, natural parks, natural reservations of botanic, forestry, geological, limnological, mixed, paleontological, speleological and zoological interest, scientific and landscape reservations and natural monuments.

The Institute of Forestry Research and Arrangement (ICAS) undertook intense activity in this field. Thus, engineer Zeno Oarcea elaborated, by 1977, the necessary studies for 13 national parks, which the Commission of Natural Monuments used for the draft of the law for the protection of nature.

Studies for the establishment of several parks were conducted from 1974 to 1978: Piatra Craiului, Rodna, Bucegi, Cozia, Călimani, expansion of the natural parks Retezat, Valea Cernei, Apuseni, Cheile Nerei, Semenic, Ceahlău, Cheile Bicazului, the Danube Delta.

The first international acknowledgements of the value of the Romanian protected areas occurred in 1979. Retezat National Park and Pietrosul Rodnei reservation have been acknowledged as biosphere reservation under the aegis of UN program Man and Biosphere (M.A.B.).

Several new laws have been published from 1974 to 1990: Law 2/1976 for the adoption of the National program for the conservation and development of the forestry sector over the period 1976-2010; Law of waters, 4/1974; Law 59/1974 on the fund of land; Law 58/1974 regarding the systematization of the territory and of the urban and rural localities.

After 1989, by Order 7/1990 of the Ministry of Waters, Forests and the Environment, 13 national parks are established: Rodna, Călimani, Ceahlău, Cheile Bicazului-Hășmaș, Bucegi, Piatra Craiului, Cozia, Retezat, Domogled-Valea Cernei, Semenic-Cheile Carașului, Cheile Nerei-Beușnița, Apuseni, Danube Delta, under the direct management of the forestry administration. They covered 397,000 ha, of which 140,000 ha of integral reservations.

The studies of Pătrășcoiu, 1990 (cited by Stoiculescu, Cr. D., 1995) showed that, at that moment, of about 350 natural objectives, 327 protected natural areas were established on an area of about 92,600 ha, of which 32 objectives were legally acknowledged (25,500 ha). Of them, 12 objectives (22,200 ha) were on forestry areas established as natural parks, and 20 (3,300 ha) were outside the forestry land. Furthermore, there were another 125 areas (29,500 ha) protected provisionally by forestry arrangements and 170 areas (37,600 ha) planned, but still unprotected, outside the national parks.

In 1990, the Ministry of Waters, Forests and the Environment elaborated the "Technical guidelines for the management and protection of the national parks, natural reservations, natural monuments and forests with functions of recreation, from the forestry fund" and determined the provisional limits of the already established national parks, taking into consideration the integral reservations and the buffer area of each national park (Order no. 7 of MAPMI).

As of 1992, the Institute of Biology of the Romanian Academy conducted *Studies for the organisation of the network of protected areas*, in parallel with the research conducted by ICAS. An inventory of the endangered taxa, of the vulnerable and rare taxa was conducted. Romania made tardive progress in the field of stopping the disappearance of taxa, the provisional documents being the *Red list of the higher plants from Romania*

Oltean, M. et. al., 1994) and the *Red list of the endemic and endangered species of plants and rare animals* (Radu, S., 1995).

The Law of the environment (137) was adopted in 1995, which included provisions for the conservation of nature and regarding the protected areas, recognising all the areas protected previously by any law, order or decision.

In 2000, the Emergency Ordinance 235, on the situation of the protected areas, on the conservation of the natural habitats, of the wild flora and fauna, is approved by Law 5/2000 regarding the Plan for the administration of the national territory (Section III). The law regulates: the administration of the protected natural areas, establishment of the state of protected area, conservation of the habitats and species, conservation of other patrimony goods, the responsible authorities and institutions, the organisation and execution of inspections, penalties etc.

Presently, Law 5/2000 and HG 230/2003 (Bălteanu et.al., 2003) nominate 11 national parks (Călimani, Ceahlău, Bicăzului-Hăşmaş gorges, Nerei-Beuşniţa gorges, Cozia, Domogled-Valea Cernei, Măcinului, Piatra Craiului and Retezat, Rodnei Mountains, Semenic-Cheile Caraşului), 6 natural parks (Balta Mică a Brăilei, Bucegi, Grădiştea Muncelului-Cioclovina, Apuseni, Iron Gorges, Vânători Neamţ) and 3 biosphere reservations (Danube Delta, Retezat and Rodnei Mountains, the latter also being national parks). There also were proposals for the following national parks: Maramureşului Mountains, the lower Mureş River meadow, Comana, the lower Prut River meadow, maybe Bran land etc.

Following the alignment of Romania to the Directive Habitats and to the Directive Birds of the European Union, in 2001, Law 462 regarding the administration of the protected natural areas, conservation of the natural habitats, of the wild flora and fauna, entered in force. The appendixes of this law list the types of natural habitats whose conservation requires their establishment as special conservation areas, the list of plant and animal species whose conservation requires the designation of the special conservation areas and of the areas of special bird-fauna protection.

Order 850 of the Ministry of the Environment was published by the end of 2003. It settled the procedure used to entrust the natural areas into custody and the way to manage them. Normative acts specific to the protected natural areas are also adopted, setting their limits, internal partitions and the special management measures (H.G. 230, O.M. n0. 552).

In 2004, administration contracts were concluded between the Ministry of the Environment and Water Management and the National Forestry Administration – Romsilva for 16 national and natural parks, as well as the contract with Neamţ County Council for the National Park Ceahlău.

Several protected areas are established in 2005: the National Park Jiu gorges, three new natural reservations and the first area of avifaunal protection – Ciuaș Forest (3 ha), covering a total of 11,324 ha (HG 1581). The same year, the Ministry of the Environment and Water Management entrusts the administration of Buila-Vânturarița National Park and of other 4 natural parks to the National Forestry Administration, while the Natural Park Lower Prut River meadow was entrusted for management by the Agency for Environmental Protection Galați.

In 2006, the Natural Park Lower Mureș River meadow was declared Ramsar site (wetland of international importance); the same year discussions were conducted for the establishment of the National Agency for Protected Areas.

Other important steps in the protection of nature are the Emergency ordinance 57/2007 regarding the administration of the protected natural areas, conservation of the natural habitats, of the wild flora and fauna; declaration of the areas of special avifaunal protection as part of the European ecological network Natura 2000 in Romania (HG 1284/2007), by de designation of the special areas of avifaunal importance (SPA); establishment of the state of protected natural area for the sites of community importance as part of the European ecological network Natura 2000 in Romania (OM 1964/2007), by the designation of the sites of community importance (SCI).

The National Agency for the Protected Areas (ANAP) was established in 2008; however, unfortunately it is not functional.

HG 1143/2010 established the state of natural area for the Natural Park Cefa, while the contract of management between the Ministry of the Environment and Water Management and the National Forestry Administration – Romsilva by which the Natural Park Cefa is entrusted to the management of Apuseni Natural Park was signed in 2011.

Law 49/2011 for the adoption of O.U.G 57/2007 regarding the administration of the protected natural areas, conservation of the natural habitats, of the wild flora and fauna was signed in 2011, when four new Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance) were also established: the Natural Park Comana, the Natural Park Iron Gates, the Natural Park Lower Mureș River meadow and Tinovul Poiana Stampei administered by the National Park Călimani.

Other Ramsar sites were established in 2012, on the occasion of COP11 Ramsar Conference, held in Bucharest between 6-13 July; these new sites cover almost 1000 sq. km: confluence of Olt River with the Danube (466.23 km²), Bistreț Lake (274.82 km²), Iezer-Călărași Lake (50 km²) and Suhaia Lake (195.9 km²).

CONCLUSIONS

Going through this historic presentation and analysing the actions taken by our forerunners, given the current ecological crisis of our environment, it is obvious that we have to increase the proportion of protected areas. For our existential needs corroborated with a national legislation in this field, reviewed and banning all illegal cuts from all forests, including the national and natural parks, we need to go further with the efforts of our predecessors for an efficient, as much as possible, protection of the protected natural areas and of our life environment.

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