

# **Tourism in the Natural Protected Areas in the Context of Economic Crisis**

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## **Abstract**

*Our country is characterized by high levels of biodiversity, both in terms of number of species and habitats and the ecosystems they form. In terms of natural protected areas, they are diverse from a typical point of view but also the content. Romania has the most diverse and valuable natural heritage in Europe and it is in a good conservation. Tourism in natural protected areas in our country has much more negative effects than positive ones. The permissive legislation and the inefficient administration of these areas contribute to this phenomenon.*

**Key words:** national parks, natural parks, preservation, biodiversity, natural heritage

**J.E.L. classification:** L83, Q20, Q57

## **1. Introduction**

A special place in the structure of a sustainable tourism is occupied by protected areas. Travel in these areas integrate a larger range, nature tourism, with numerous common elements of this perspective with the ecotourism, rural tourism, green tourism, adventure tourism and more. For this purpose there are also used some similar concepts such as:

- **the ecotourism** is a journey into natural areas, which teaches the local communities, providing at the same time economic opportunities that are used for the conservation and preservation of the ecosystems. The ecotourism supports practices that have environmental implications and work towards a sustainable development. The ecotourism also involves a large mass of people traveling from developed to developing countries. These ecotourists have a high standard of living, enough free time and more money to spend. They seek experiences in nature, in a welcoming environment. They are environmentally friendly and focus on watching and protecting the natural habitats and resources of the archaeological. They prefer simple facilities with minimum impact on the environment, agreeing to pay more on these services and products which are the result of environmental exploitation;
- **the tourism based on nature:** involves viewing wild landscapes and bird watching's practice, wildlife photography, trekking, hiking, camping, canoeing;
- **the geotourism:** is that form of tourism that supports and enhances the geophysical characteristics of a space environment, aesthetical culture, heritage and well-being of residents;
- **the travel awareness:** encourages a deeper understanding of nature, people and the host population;
- **gentle tourism, soft, green** = sustainable tourism;
- **responsible tourism:** suggests that everyone involved in an activity of tourism, tourists or service providers, should adopt a responsible attitude towards tourist destination;
- **alternative tourism:** is the opposite of traditional tourism and suggests a different kind of behavior, the prevailing mentality in tourism based on nature classic alternative;

- **adventure travel:** tourists looking for activities similar to those earlier imply competition, excitement and development of physical skills. In fact, a little risk, adrenaline is sometimes a good quality adventure travel package. This segment includes activities such as mountaineering, climbing, rafting, kayaking, mountain-biking;
- **heritage and culture;**
- **travel for educational purposes.**

In fact, the interdependence of these forms has made often and / or numerous authors to address a report saying vice versa, in our opinion argued that the ecotourism, rural tourism, the green or adventure one are ways to spend holidays inside the protected areas. Of course, this vision must be accepted in connection with the areas designated a protected area. As by definition, mild environment, with nature, these forms can be applied without reservation or peripheral buffer zones of protected areas.

## **2. Travelling in protected areas**

Great interest in visiting natural areas, mainly in protected areas is determined by the action of **specific factors**, the emergence of life changes in population, consumer behavior. Between them it must be mentioned:

- Tourists today are more numerous than those of yesterday, in the case of those who wish to participate in recreational activities, sports or evocative of adventure and want to become familiar with the history, culture and natural environment specific regions visited. Tourists today are physically and intellectually more active than the ones in past;
- There are now many forms of particular interest centers on the individual's nature and wildlife, historic sites, economic and professional activities, cultural;

- There is an increase in tourism that draws visitors' wishes to know the areas where their ancestors lived. The ecotourism, the cultural tourism and the adventurous one know also a rapid growth.
- A growing number of people are looking for destinations, tourist areas and novel products. Therefore, the opportunities to develop new areas or developing the existing one abound;
- Much stronger than in the past, tourists are concerned about the environment and society. That's why they come back with pleasure and regularity in well-organized and less polluted areas, avoiding destinations where there are ecological and social problems;
- Highlighting the tourism often encourage the environmental preservation activities, historical sites and traditions. Therefore, the controlled ecotourism promoted to justify and serve the purposes of preservation;
- The increase of the educational level and with it the respect for nature, to the values of culture and civilization in general, a higher level of education translates into increased demand for tourism, for outdoor activities correlated with the concern of learning during the journey and to acquire new knowledge and experiences;
- Changing the population structure by age groups to increase the share of third age; the previsions of the World Health Organization show a 22.1% share of the world population of more than 60 years in 2050 and an increase in their 28.1% in 2100. Extrapolating current behaviors can appreciate an increase in the number of passengers in nature, the demand for recreational activities such as hiking, wildlife observation, fishing, nature study etc., and interest in less crowded destinations and more comfortable accommodation units and catering;

- Increasing the duration of leisure time and changes within its distribution, in particular, the fragmentation of time spent for holidays in several periods, which favors the traveling for leisure, peace and comfort. However, the increasing life expectancy allows a concentration of free time after the age of 60 years, associated with the behavioral changes caused by natural wear of the body and stimulates travel in nature;
- The increase of revenues; beyond the positive impact on tourism in general, the increase revenues encourage long-distance travel, allowing access to areas where a system of fees (parks, reservations etc.) and encourage the demand for a high level of comfort and quality service. In this context it should be mentioned the diversification options for destinations and/or forms of more unusual vacation travel for remote destinations , active rest and relaxation methods, all resulting in an increased demand for the protected areas;
- The increase of the social and environmental concerns. The worldwide population is more and more concerned about the social injustice and the environmental issues. There is an increased concern regarding the need of low impact activities on the environment; people are increasingly involved in supporting the conservation and the development initiatives of local communities. There is also a shift of emphasis towards less resource activities with low environmental impact. All this leads to an increased interest in forms of sustainable tourism. The protected areas represent ideal places for the protection and conservation of natural and anthropogenic environment;
- The increase of labor demand determines the necessity to reconstruct the physical and intellectual capacity of the population;
- The increase of the training level of the population determines a reorientation of the hierarchy, seen in terms of a stringent need.

To these factors we can add many others, general or specific ones to an area, affecting the tourism in general or the protected areas. Given their action, we can anticipate a positive development of tourism in protected areas and an increase in the interest of such travel. Obviously, **the quantitative developments** will be accompanied by a series of qualitative changes. The most important may be nominated:

- the increased demand for tourism in protected areas, motivated by the role of these areas in the conservation of natural ecosystems in most countries of the world;
- the diversification of the offer, starting from the fact that the protected areas offer numerous opportunities to spend the holidays, responding to more and more varied needs;
- improve the services offered both in terms of content of holidays and also comfort;
- the active participation, motivated by the need for involvement in the conservation, awareness and promotion of protected areas;
- the promotion of the environmental impact forms (the ecotourism, rural tourism, green tourism, etc.) and the activities with an educational role.

In addition to these general or particular trends, there can be others, specific to each geographical area, country, region or type of habitat.

### **3. Categories of visitors of the natural protected areas**

The visits of tourists in the protected areas are determined by their desire to know the nature, to try new experiences, to spend time in this context, to escape from the areas/touristic destinations consequently established, urbanized and crowded.

With the increasing experience and deepening problems of tourists concerning the protection of the environment and responsible use of

resources, there have appeared and crystallized forms of spending holidays, more friendly with the environment; also tourists have become more aware of the need to protect the environment and more responsible, more involved in this matter.

Also, the higher level of training the tourists, the complex knowledge about the areas visited has led to the increase of the support and involvement of tourists in the protection and preservation of those destinations.

However, the increasing interest for nature and in particular for protected areas has resulted in fragmentation problems and excessive use of space. The intensive exploitation of protected areas had as result both the damage of the environment and also the reduction of the economic benefits of the respective perimeters or their communities, resulting in stimulation or reservations about encouraging the tourism activities.

However, starting from the fundamental idea of setting up parks (protected areas), which is to conserve the resources for the benefit of people, the essential problem is to establish the equilibrium, the optimum ratio between protection and recovery. This is a fundamental task management in the protected areas, a demand seen in the context of the ongoing of the phenomena.

In the specialty literature there are presented **four types of behaviors specific to the intensive destinations for natural attractions** (Theobald F. William, 1998):

- **hard core (hard core):** scientists or those who participate in a journey that aimed at protecting nature, feeding animals, planting seedlings. It is specially designed for educational purpose or similar actions travel;
- **dedicated (dedicated):** people who travel especially to visit protected areas and who want to understand the local cultural and natural history;
- **mainstream (unusual):** people who visit the Amazon, the Rwanda Gorilla Park or other unusual destinations, strange;

- **casual (occasional):** people who take part in such trips only accidentally, as part of their movement.

Tourism in protected areas has a plurality of reasons, largely different from other types of tourists. As a result, the travel industry in nature must be properly organized.

**Table 1. Typology of domestic tourists to national parks**

<b>Tourist type</b>	<b>Demographic and behavioral characteristics</b>	<b>Preferences for facilities and experiences</b>
<b>Economy</b>	Often high school or university students, travelling in large groups by public transport or motorbike.	Need campsites or hostels, cheap eateries and robust facilities such as erosion-tolerant mountain trails. Enjoy natural surroundings, with active sports such as mountain-climbing or ‘tubing’ often preferred to a more knowledge-seeking engagement with nature.
<b>Aspiration</b>	Young professionals, better-off students, active and adventurous. Generally travel in small groups of like-minded friends, and will avoid more intensively used sites.	Require good campsites or other inexpensive accommodation. Enjoy natural surroundings, increasingly willing to engage with nature from a biocentric stance. Often enjoy nature-based activities such as bird-watching, cycling, or rafting.
<b>Mass Budget</b>	Large family, neighborhood or work-related groups. Travel generally by public or chartered	Enjoy fresh air, natural surroundings, and the company of others.

	transport, mostly for day-trips. Tolerant of high densities of people.	Occasionally need cheap guesthouses for overnight stays, as well as facilities such as picnic and relaxation areas, souvenir shops, playgrounds.
<b>Family</b>	Nuclear (or slightly extended) families with private transport, often exploring more widely afield because of availability of better transport and other facilities.	Enjoy natural surroundings but unlikely to walk far; need similar facilities to Mass Budget tourists but with a greater range, i.e. better quality accommodation and restaurants and more activities, such as pony-rides and scuba-diving.
<b>Incentive</b>	Small or medium-sized work-related groups on company incentive or team-building programs.	Need mid-range accommodation and facilities, perhaps with challenging activities such as problem-solving, 'outward bound' games.
<b>Pilgrimage</b>	Participants are from all walks of life, and may stay for a few hours to several weeks.	Visit holy or sacred places (caves, mountain tops, shrines) for spiritual refreshment or guidance, or to pray for a specific gift or blessing. A range of accommodation types is needed.

**Source:** Protected Areas Program, Vol. 16, no. 2, The Visitor Experience Challenge 2006, IUCN, Gland Switzerland, 2006, page 15

It may be noted that this typology distinguished visitors in terms of income from those with fewer financial resources, such as students, who

prefer cheaper accommodation units but „extreme” relaxing methods such as mountaineering, climbing, etc., passing by the tourism practiced with the family which requires safety, quality and „more peaceful” ways to relax so that, finally, to show the pilgrims who prefer places like natural sacred caves, peaks, etc., for a spiritual relief. Another important category is the „stimulus – incentive trips” which involves the companies at the expense of certain groups of employees to practice teambuilding in order to weld the team.

**Table 2. Typology of international tourists to national parks**

<b>Tourist type</b>	<b>Demographic and behavioral characteristics</b>	<b>Preferences for facilities and experiences</b>
<b>Elite</b>	Rich, perhaps sports or entertainment celebrity, CEO of major company, or Royalty. Willing to pay large sums for exclusivity.	Need top-class facilities and services, e.g. luxury lodges / camps, rapid transport connections and good communications, good-quality wildlife and wilderness experiences.
<b>Special Interest</b>	Dedicated to a particular hobby, fairly adventurous, often wealthy, prepared to pay to indulge hobby and have others organize logistics. Travel independently or with a small group of like-minded others.	May have little interest in culture unless part of the tour focus or hobby. Require special facilities, e.g. fishing-boats, bird-guides, dive equipment. May have active involvement, e.g. research project. Accept discomfort and long travel where necessary to achieve aims.

<p><b>General Interest</b></p>	<p>Often prefer security, company and convenience of group tour, although increasingly travel as individuals on tailor-made itinerary with a tour operator. Relatively wealthy, often active, perhaps busy professionals with limited time. Includes expatriates resident in developing countries.</p>	<p>Keen on nature/wildlife when not hard to see, and on easily-accessible cultural aspects. Need facilities and organized activities for ‘soft’ adventure and accessing park, e.g. easy hiking trails, whale-watching, low-grade white-water rafting. Dislike travelling long distances without points of interest. Need good amenities, although may accept basic conditions for short periods.</p>
<p><b>Backpacker Plus</b></p>	<p>Often experienced travelers and generally in a well-paid job or career; may have taken sabbatical to travel for Longer periods.</p>	<p>Genuinely desire to learn about culture and nature, and require good information. Accept basic facilities but prefer more up market accommodation when available; can pay for additional services to facilitate and intensify experiences.</p>
<p><b>Backpacker</b></p>	<p>Travel for as long as possible on limited budget, often taking a year off between school/university and starting work. May join organized project for all</p>	<p>May perceive rigors of local transport, cheap accommodation, etc. as travel experience rather than understanding local culture. Enjoy trekking and scenery, but often</p>

	or part of the trip.	cannot visit remote areas because of expense. Require low-cost facilities.
<b>Mass</b>	Often inexperienced at travelling, prefer to travel in large groups, may be wealthy. Includes cruise ship passengers and some safari tourists.	Like superficial aspects of local culture, enjoy natural scenery and wildlife if easy to see. Need good facilities, and will only travel far if in comfort.
<b>Explorer</b>	Individualistic, solitary, adventurous. May be relatively well-off but prefer not to spend much money.	Require no special facilities; reject purpose-built tourism facilities in favor of local ones.

**Source:** Protected Areas Program, Vol. 16, no. 2, The Visitor Experience Challenge 2006, IUCN, Gland Switzerland, 2006, page 13

In this case also, the financial resources are a criterion for the categories of tourists presented in the table above. Thus, the elites are polar opposites, that rich celebrities who prefer to spend money for exclusivity and explorers who are solitary and prefer not to spend too much money in an ecotourism trip.

#### **4. Natural protected areas from Romania**

**Romania** is characterized by a **high level of biodiversity**, manifested both in terms of number of species, habitats and ecosystems that they form. The natural and semi-natural ecosystems from Romania cover 47% of the country. As a result of the studies made using the CORINE Bio-tops Program there were identified and characterized a total of 783 types of **habitats** (13 coastal habitats, 89 humid areas, 196

grasslands, 206 forests, 54 swamps, 90 rock/sand and 135 agricultural) in 261 analyzed areas across the country. There were also identified 44 important **Bird Areas**, with a total surface of 6 557 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 3% of the country. The high diversity of habitats results in a high **diversity of flora and fauna**. There have been identified in Romania 3700 plant species, of which only 23 are declared monuments, 74 are extinct, 39 are endangered, 171 vulnerable and 1253 rare. A significant proportion (60%) is represented by characteristic species of subalpine meadows, pastures and mountain meadows. There is also a number of 600 species of algae and 700 species of marine and coastal plants. **The endemic species** represent 4%. Regarding the **fauna**, there've been identified 33 792 species, of which 33 085 invertebrates and 707 vertebrates (191 species of fish, 20 species of amphibians, 30 reptiles, 364 birds and 102 mammal species). Of these, 55 are endangered (11 species of fish, three amphibian species, 4 species of reptiles, 18 birds and 19 species of mammals), 69 are vulnerable (16 species of fish, 9 species of amphibians, a species of reptiles, 17 birds and 26 mammal species) and 24 are rare (11 species of fish and 13 species of mammals). Following the inventories, resulting an estimated 5600 brown bears (60% of the European brown bear - *Ursus arctos*), approximately 3 000 wolves (40% of the European population of wolves – *Canis lupus*) and 1 500 lynx (40% of the European population of lynx – *Lynx lynx*), this species is a symbol of wildlife and natural habitats that can be used to repopulate other areas of Europe, which saw a decline of these species. The bison, a rare animal, protected by law, disappeared from the forests of our country for over a century and today lives only in the reservations.

**The natural and semi-natural ecosystems** cover 47% of the country. There were identified and characterized 783 types of habitats (13 coastal habitats, 143 specific to humid areas, 196 habitats specific to pastures and hay fields, 206 forest habitats, 90 specific habitats of dunes and rocky areas and 135 farmland habitats) in 261 areas analyzed through the country.

**Habitats** in Romania are characterized by a specific composition of flora and fauna components and are influenced by different biocenoses or edaphic and climate factors. The influences of the arid climate from the east part and to the ocean in the west of the country and the climate differences between the plain and mountain relief imposed by altitude, have led to a large number of habitats. Another factor that determines the wide variety of habitats in Romania is represented by the chemical composition of rocks in the substrate (soil, subsoil).

Romania's territory includes in a relatively equal proportion, the three geographical units – plains, hills and mountains, with a great diversity of climatic and hydrological conditions which differentiates a number of about 52 eco-regions with a variety of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems – specific to coastal and littoral areas of the Black Sea, grasslands, hills, mountains, lakes, streams and meadows, the dry or humid areas, including the ones specific to the Danube Delta. Our country has a unique natural heritage composed of the Carpathians (65% of cross-Carpathian region), as well as one of the most important humid areas in Europe – the Danube Delta (the second largest in Europe). It should be noted that Romania holds 30% of carnivore species in Europe and also about 300 000 ha of virgin forests.

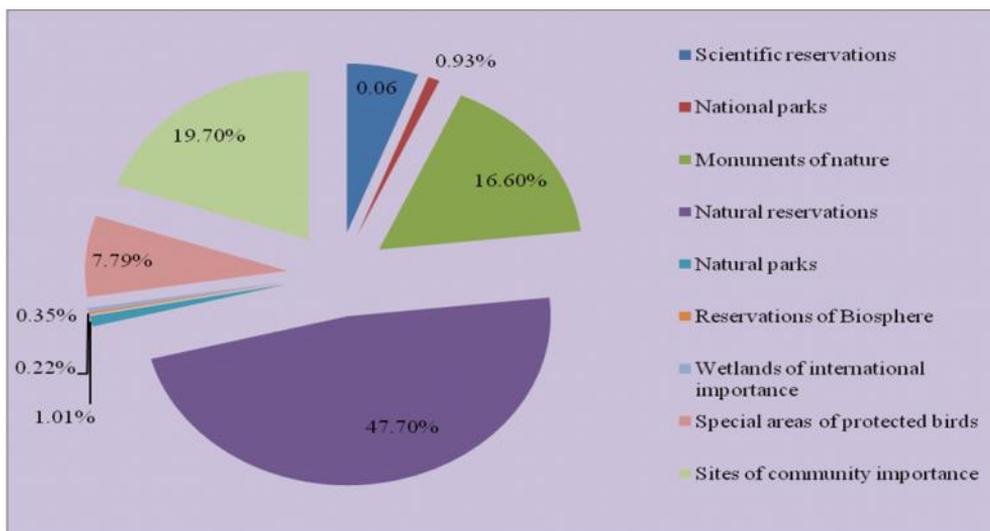
Regarding **the natural protected areas**, among the Member States of the European Union, Romania has the largest bio-geographical diversity (five of the 11 European bio-geographical regions, such as Alpine, Continental, Pannonia and the Black Sea steppe), this being mostly in a good conservation status. Also, due to the geographical position of Romania, flora and fauna have Asian influences from the north, the Mediterranean and southern European continental components from the north-west.

**Table 3. The natural protected areas from Romania, during the period 2008-2010**

Categories of natural protected areas	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	Percentage in the total level of the year 2010
	<b>-number-</b>			<b>(%)</b>
<b>Scientific reservations</b>	77	77	79	5,70
<b>National parks</b>	13	13	13	0,93
<b>Monuments of nature</b>	230	230	230	16,60
<b>Natural reservations</b>	661	661	661	47,70
<b>Natural parks</b>	14	14	14	1,01
<b>Reservations of biosphere</b>	3	3	3	0,22
<b>Wetlands of international importance</b>	5	6	5	0,35
<b>Special areas of protected birds</b>	108	108	108	7,79
<b>Sites of community importance</b>	273	273	273	19,70
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1384</b>	<b>1385</b>	<b>1386</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Romania in numbers 2011, National Institute of Statistics, Bucharest, 2011

Analyzing the table above we see that the declaration of a new protected area in Romania is not a concern for the competent authorities as during the period 2008-2010, the number of protected areas increased by only two protected areas, respective the scientific reservations.



**Figure 1. Percentage distribution of natural protected areas from Romania in 2010**

As regards the total percentage for 2010 it can be seen that the largest are the natural reservations (47,70%) and the fewest are the Reservations of Biosphere (0,22%), but being more valuable than other categories listed.

**Table 4. The surface of natural protected areas during the period 2008-2010**

Categories of Romanian natural protected areas	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	% in the total level of the year 2010
	<b>Surface –ha-</b>			<b>(%)</b>
<b>Scientific reservations</b>	310232	310232	310536	3,34
<b>National parks</b>	315857	316271	316271	3,40
<b>Monuments of nature</b>	96228	96228	84448	0,91
<b>Natural reservations</b>	308031	308031	273056	2,94

<b>Natural parks</b>	737428	763894	763894	8,21
<b>Reservations of biosphere</b>	664446	664446	664446	7,14
<b>Wetlands of international importance</b>	616571	616571	616571	6,62
<b>Special areas of protected birds</b>	2992798	2988713	2988713	32,13
<b>Sites of community importance</b>	3284092	3284092	3284092	35,31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9325683</b>	<b>9348478</b>	<b>9302027</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Romania in numbers 2011, National Institute of Statistics, Bucharest, 2011

In terms of occupied areas, the natural protected areas in Romania have no significant developments during the analyzed period, the largest being the sites of Community Importance (3284092 ha) and Bird Special Protection Areas (2988713 ha).

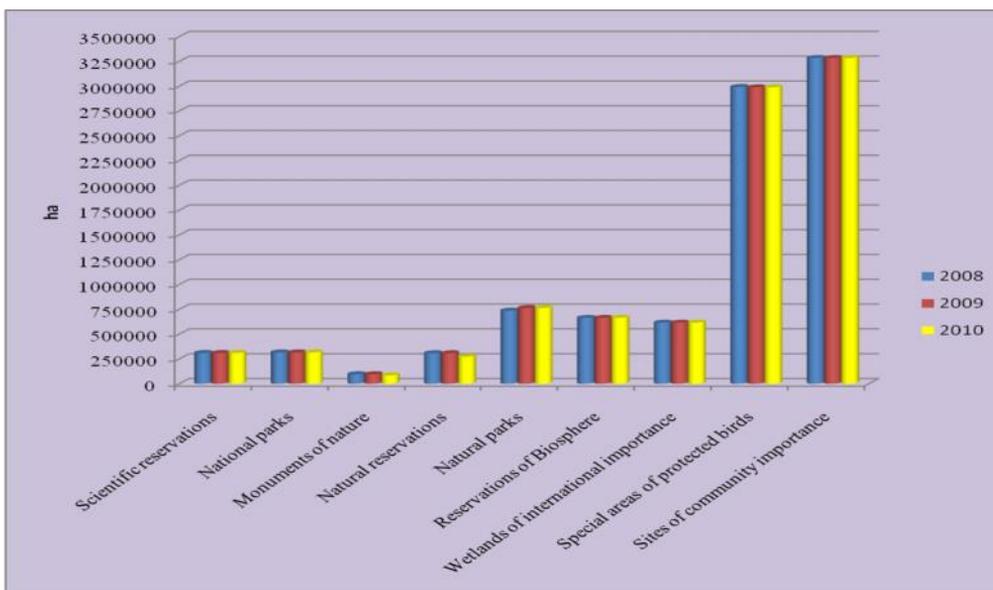
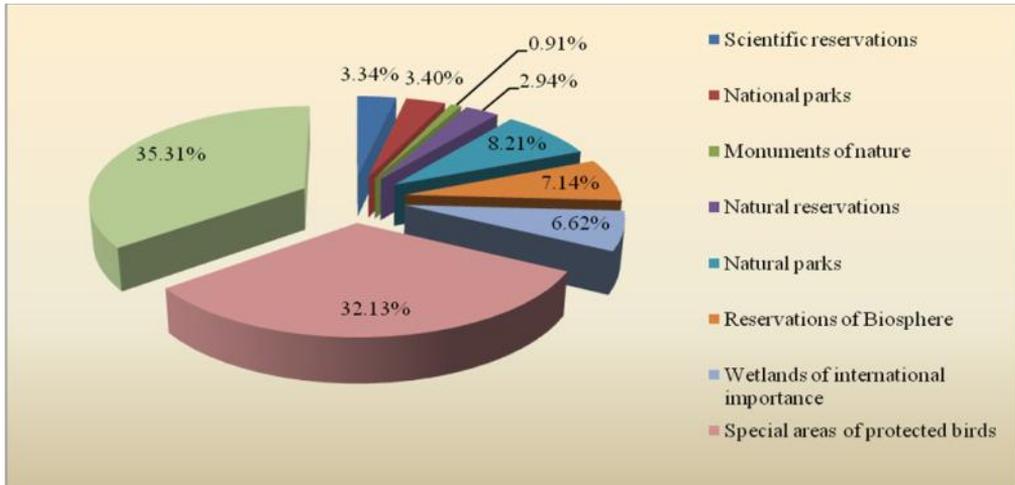


Figure 2. The evolution of the occupied surface of natural protected areas from Romania during the period 2008-2010

The Natural monuments are occupying the smallest area (84448 ha) as they are represented by species of flora and fauna mainly, such as the chamois, garofita Pietrei Craiului, Edelweiss etc.



**Figure 3. Occupied surface by the natural protected areas from Romania during the year 2010 (%)**

In terms of percentage distribution of area occupied by protected areas, national parks belong to only 3,4% even if they are 13 and the natural parks have a rate almost three times higher (8,21%), bring much larger because in terms of numbers thy are only 14.

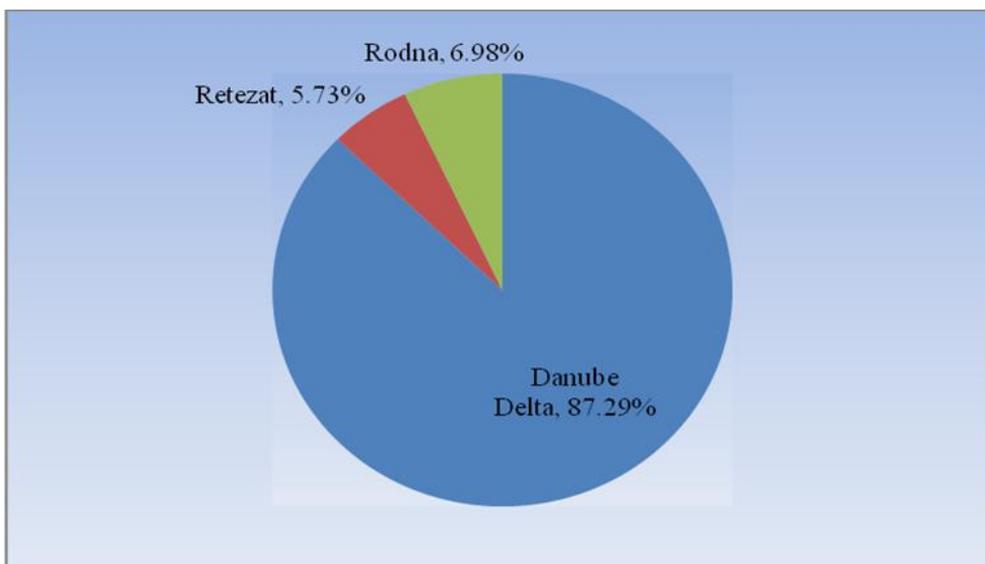
**Table 5. Reservations of Biosphere in Romania**

Reservations of Biosphere	Year 2000	Year 2005	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	% in total surface of Reservations of Biosphere in 2010
	-ha-							%
<b>Danube Delta</b>	580000	580000	580000	580000	580000	580000	580000	87,29
<b>Retezat</b>	55000	38047	38047	38047	38047	38047	38047	5,73

<b>Rodna</b>	46399	46399	46399	46399	46399	46399	46399	6,98
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>679000</b>	<b>664446</b>	<b>664446</b>	<b>664446</b>	<b>664446</b>	<b>664446</b>	<b>664446</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Romania in numbers 2011, National Institute of Statistics, Bucharest, 2011

**Of the three Reservations of Biosphere from Romania, the Danube Delta** occupies 580000 ha (declared in 1990) and is in direct coordination of the Ministry of Environment. **Retezat** occupies 38 047 ha (declared in 1979) and **Pietrosul Mare (Rodnei)** - 47304 ha (declared in 1979). These latter two are considered national parks in terms of surface as they fit in this category also. It should be noted that the surface of Rodna and Retezat national parks coincides with the reservation of biosphere.



**Figure 4. The percentage distribution of occupied surface of Romanian Reservations of Biosphere (%)**

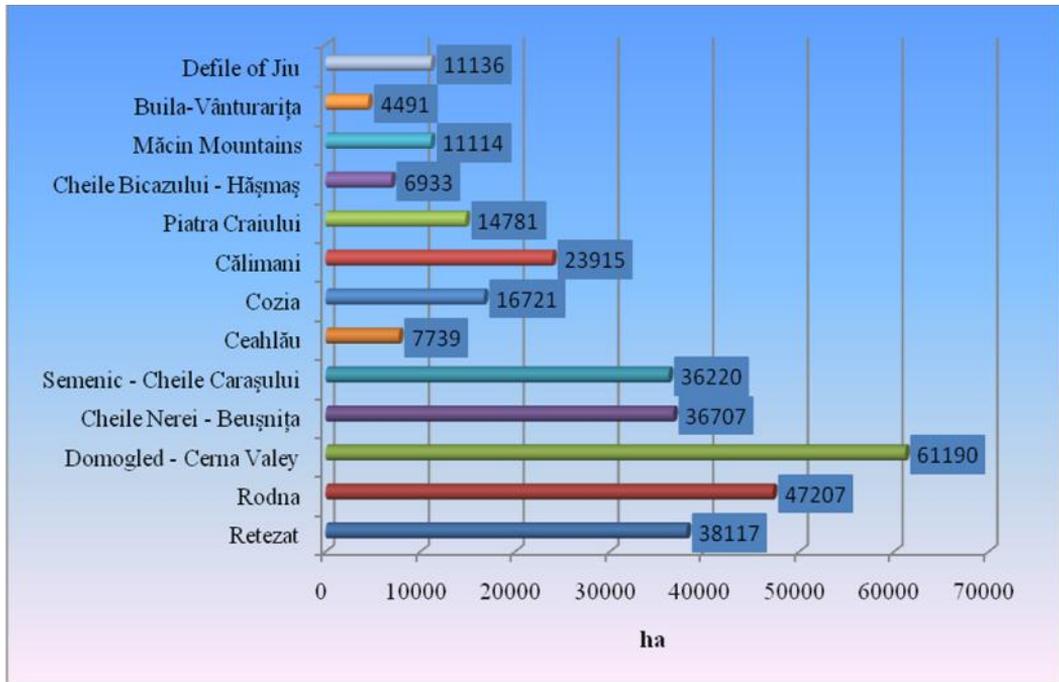
The Reservation of the Biosphere the Danube Delta is the largest of the three reported in Romania (87,29%), followed by Rodna (6,98%) and Retezat (5,73%).

**Table 6. National parks from Romania**

National parks	Decl. year	Adm.	Year 2000	Year 2005	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	% total surface of national parks in 2010
			-ha-							%
<b>Retezat</b>	1935	Romsilva	38047	38047	38047	38047	38047	38117	38117	12,05
<b>Rodna</b>	1990	Romsilva	46399	46399	46399	46399	46399	47207	47207	14,93
<b>Domogled – Cerna Valley</b>	1990	Romsilva	60100	60100	60100	60100	60100	61190	61190	19,35
<b>Cheile Nerei - Beuşniţa</b>	1990	Romsilva	37100	37100	37100	37100	37100	36707	36707	11,61
<b>Semenic - Cheile Caraşului</b>	1990	Romsilva	36664	36665	36665	36665	36665	36220	36220	11,45
<b>Ceahlău</b>	1995	Neamt County Council	8396	8396	8396	8396	8396	7739	7739	2,45
<b>Cozia</b>	1981	Romsilva	17100	17100	17100	17100	17100	16721	16721	5,29
<b>Călimani</b>	1990	Romsilva	24041	24041	24041	24041	24041	23915	23915	7,56
<b>Piatra Craiului</b>	1990	Romsilva	14800	14800	14800	14800	14800	14781	14781	4,67
<b>Cheile Bicazului - Hăşmaş</b>	1990	Romsilva	6575	6575	6575	6575	6575	6933	6933	2,19
<b>Muntii Măcinului</b>	2000	Romsilva	11321	11321	11321	11321	11321	11114	11114	3,51
<b>Buila-Vânturariţa</b>	2004	Romsilva	-	4186	4186	4186	4186	4491	4491	1,42
<b>Defile of Jiu</b>	2005	Romsilva	-	11127	11127	11127	11127	11136	11136	3,52
<b>TOTAL</b>	-	-	<b>333206</b>	<b>315857</b>	<b>315857</b>	<b>315857</b>	<b>315857</b>	<b>316271</b>	<b>316271</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Romania in numbers 2011, National Institute of Statistics, Bucharest, 2011, Plans of Management and the official web-sites of the national parks from Romania

Analyzing the table below (Table 6.), we see that of the 13 national parks Domogled-Cerna Valley has the highest percentage (19,35%) of the total concerning the occupied area, followed by Rodna Mountains (14,93%) and Retezat (12,05%). The lowest share belongs to the National Park Buila-Vânturarița (1,42%). Romsilva is the administrator of 12 from the 13 national parks.



**Figure 5. Occupied surface of national parks from Romania in 2010**

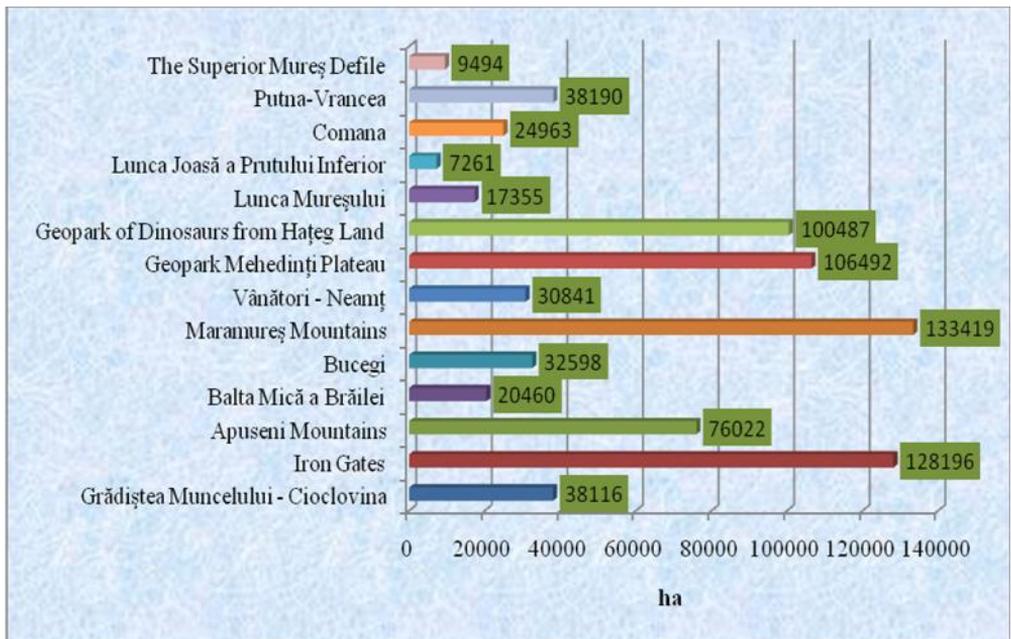
National parks Domogled- Cerna Valley and Buila-Vânturarița are in opposite poles concerning the surface, respective 61190 ha and 4491 ha.

**Table 7. Natural parks from Romania**

Natural parks	Decl. year	Adm	Year 2000	Year 2005	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	% total surface of natural parks in 2010
			<b>-ha-</b>							<b>%</b>
<b>Grădiştea Muncelului - Cioclovina</b>	2000	Romsilva	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	38116	38116	4,99
<b>Iron Gates</b>	2000	Romsilva	115656	115656	115656	115656	115656	128196	128196	16,78
<b>Apuseni Mountains</b>	1990	Romsilva	75784	75784	75784	75784	75784	76022	76022	9,95
<b>Balta Mică a Brăilei</b>	1979	Romsilva	17529	17529	17529	17529	17529	20460	20460	2,68
<b>Bucegi</b>	1990	Romsilva	32663	32663	32663	32663	32663	32598	32598	4,28
<b>Maramureş Mountains</b>	2004	Romsilva	-	148850	148850	148850	148850	133419	133419	17,47
<b>Vânători - Neamţ</b>	2003	Romsilva	-	30818	30818	30818	30818	30841	30841	4,04
<b>Geopark Mehedinţi Plateau</b>	2004	Mehedinţi County Council	-	106000	106000	106000	106000	106492	106492	13,94
<b>Geopark Dinosaurs from Haţeg Land</b>	2004	University of Bucharest	-	102392	102392	102392	102392	100487	100487	13,15
<b>Lunca Mureşului</b>	2004	Romsilva	-	17166	17166	17166	17166	17355	17355	2,27
<b>Lunca Joasă a Prutului Inferior</b>	2004	The agency for Environm. Protection Galaţi	-	8247	8247	8247	8247	7261	7261	0,95
<b>Comana</b>	2004	Romsilva	-	24963	24963	24963	24963	24963	24963	3,27
<b>Putna-Vrancea</b>	2004	Romsilva	-	38204	38204	38204	38204	38190	38190	4,99
<b>The Superior Mureş Defile</b>	2007	Romsilva	-	-	-	9156	9156	9494	9494	1,24
<b>TOTAL</b>	-	-	<b>218969</b>	<b>728272</b>	<b>728272</b>	<b>737428</b>	<b>737428</b>	<b>763894</b>	<b>763894</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Romania in numbers 2011, National Institute of Statistics, Bucharest, 2011, Plans of Management and official web-sites of the natural parks from Romania

Of the 14 declared natural parks in Romania, Maramureş Mountains have the highest percentage (17,47%) in terms of area occupied, followed by the Iron Gates (16,78%) and the Geopark Mehedinţi Plateau (13,94%). Romsilva is the administrator of 11 from 14 natural parks of the country.



**Figure 6. Surface occupied by natural parks from Romania in 2010**

Maramureş Mountains have supremacy in terms of area occupied by natural parks in Romania, 133419 ha. Meanwhile, Lunca Joasă a Prutului Inferior is the smallest natural park from Romania, with a surface of 7261 ha.

Also, Romsilva has in his custody, through Forest Reservations, over 200 natural monuments in forests.

## **5. The current state of tourism development in the protected areas of Romania**

In general, *the landscape is in a good state of preservation*, being altered in some areas by human activities such as deforestation, motorized access in scientific reservations, and poaching, grazing and intensive construction of holiday homes. To these interventions it is added the mentality of Romanian people against the concept of protected area, the type of behavior to be taken when traveling inside a national park, the attitude towards ownership of land located within a national park. Even if the land is owned by local people in the scientific reservations, they do not understand, being educated in this regard to work towards protecting the biodiversity, the sense of ownership is much stronger than the conservation and transmission in its current form the tourism resources in these areas. One reason may be the communist area when the ownership was dispossessed for a long time and therefore this feeling increased. However, the lack of public awareness campaigns regarding the impact of their actions on the environment causes such behavior. Analyzing the conflicts in natural protected areas of our country, we see the predominance of poaching with major effects on the number of chamois copies and motorized access and camping areas for tourists, illegal dumping of garbage in the scientific reservations. Solving these problems requires significant financial resources to control and prevent such actions, for the reconstruction of affected areas such as the dumps are stored, the presence of rangers in the key points on the trails, installing multiple boards in high traffic areas of tourists, because most of them were destructed. Finally, the application of the existing legislation on the environmental protection may reduce the number of offences in the mountains of Romania.

That part of the total national parks and natural pasture which is represented in terms of ownership, belonging to municipalities, arises major disputes in this area such as deforestation, building approvals data

for various holiday homes even inside or on the edge of the park, construction of roads inside the park etc. These pastures belong to local communities, the resident population using them for grazing animals in summer. To avoid the intensive use of these natural resources, we must find alternatives for local communities to obtain revenues.

In the Management plans of protected areas, even if it states that hunting and fishing are prohibited, although there were found poaching actions, the consequence being the reduction of the number of valuable species, threatened or endangered species and even with extinction, which is requiring actions for repopulation. To this state also contributed the large number of dogs from the sheepfolds in the area. In addition, it was reported the construction of numerous roads by illegal poachers, sometimes in areas of scientific research reserves, which prohibited any activity, much less the construction of access roads used by locals and tourists to access the sightseeing in the park or pasturing, for walks on weekends or even for different endure competitions. All these vehicles bring serious damage to the flora and fauna in the park, pollution (gas, waste, fireplaces, intensive collection of flora etc.) resulting with irreversible effects on the biodiversity.

Also, the natural parks and natural caves are often destroyed in order to extract „mine flowers” and turning them into commercial objects. To all these it is added the household garbage dumped at the edge of glacial lakes and sheepfolds located near the rivers, gathering berries, herbs, muscles and mushrooms.

## **Conclusions**

In order to mitigate the negative effects of human actions on the protected areas from Romania, there are required some actions, such as the involvement of volunteers in the management of protected areas in Europe, providing an alternative education and helping to improve the access to those who, regardless of age, acquire new skills in the field of nature protection. There is a need to improve the infrastructure in these

parks by building visitor centers and information points, installation of information boards. Also, several initiatives were undertaken in schools close to national and natural parks that need to be repeated to obtain favorable results and involvement of pupils and students in preserving the biodiversity in parks. Finally, the action is to prevent the degradation of the landscapes through the co-participation of custodians, the mountain gendarmerie, police and the representatives of the forest districts.

Local communities are the first by themselves and in their interest to work and help the development of tourism in protected areas, bringing many benefits to the communities. Among these benefits there are listed:

- minimizing the negative impact on the nature and culture, impact which could destroy the protected area;
- educating the tourists about the importance of preservation;
- highlighting the importance of the responsible operators, to cooperate with the population and local authorities in order to satisfy the community needs;
- providing funds for the conservation and management of protected areas;
- the increased need for zoning the regional tourism and planning the flows of tourists for the natural areas which will become ecotouristic destinations;
- the need for social and environmental studies and also long-term monitoring programs to assess and minimize the impact;
- struggle to maximize the economic benefits of the host country, community and local businesses and especially of local people from natural protected areas;
- ensuring that the tourism development does not exceed a certain limit of social and environmental change determined by the researchers in collaboration with the residents;
- using infrastructure developed in harmony with the natural and cultural environment, minimizing the use of fossil fuels and conserving the vegetation and local fauna.

In addition to its negative effects, tourism can contribute to a raise of the living standards and the local community, being an importance source of income, the administrators of touristic areas facing an attraction of workforce involved in the conservation projects and management of the natural sites.

It can be considered that the presented confirm the existence of a valuable potential and some steps already taken in the process of setting up an integrated system of protected areas.

At the same time, the detailed analysis have confirmed, in many cases, a superficiality in managing these areas, reflected in the fact that either are not approved and therefore not operational or the lack of implementation capacity of the administration's (human, organizational, financial etc.) to create the management plans, monitoring and continuously adapting them.

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