

THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZING AND PROMOTING ECOTOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS

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Abstract: In this paper we analyzed and described a wetland ecosystem (Lunca Mureșului Natural Park), being interested in preserving the ecological balance in this area. From the analysis carried out, we noticed that in this park tourists can carry out many activities, namely: bike rides that can be rented, walks to admire the diverse flora and fauna, but also canoe rides on the Mures River. The analyzed park offers tourists a multitude of activities, being very important that these facilities are promoted among young people and possible visitors, also extremely important is the ecological education of those who visit these protected areas in order to reduce the impact that visitors have on ecosystems.

Key words: ecological tourism, organization, promotion, preservation of ecosystems

INTRODUCTION

The link between ecotourism and protected natural areas is a very strong one because one of the features of this form of tourism is the active contribution to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

The number of tourists in the protected areas is high, therefore there are some methods of rationalizing the flow of visitors [2]:

- limitation of the number of tourists;
- another method is to avoid crowding and reduce the impact by dispersing tourists;
- limiting tourists in certain seasons to avoid the destruction of ecosystems.
- extremely important is also the existence of areas for camping, for parking, for bicycles, etc.

Ecotourism emphasizes the conservation of ecosystems but also the education and information of tourists [8].

According to specialized literature [2], informing tourists consists of:

- Signage of routes and parking lots for tourists coming by car;
- Marking of routes for tourists who prefer to travel by bike or on foot;
- The existence of specially arranged places for parking, for mooring boats, for camping, tourist information services and spaces for food;
- Provision of means of transport for tourists to visit protected areas.

This last measure reduces the impact that tourists have on natural ecosystems.

In the specialized literature there are numerous studies on ecotourism and the importance of protected areas [1,3,4,6,9,10,11,14].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main research methods used in this work are: observation, analysis and description.

RESEARCH RESULTS

According to specialized literature, the park is located in the west of the country, it covers an area of 17,455.2 ha, 14350.5 ha in Arad County and 3104.7 ha in Timiș County [12,13,5,7].

Figure 1 shows the internal zoning and permitted/prohibited activities in accordance with the protected natural areas in Romania. Regarding sustainable management, we note that there are areas where research activities, education, ecotourism, rational use of meadows, ecological reconstruction, hunting and fishing are allowed, but the legislation in force must be respected, as construction and investments, cars, motorcycles, the use of water skis but also the throwing of garbage by those who visit the area.



Figure 1. Description of the Park

Source: own photo

In the analyzed park, tourists can practice many recreational activities that can be promoted in the form of ecotourism packages, for example: kayak-canoe rides that can be rented from specially arranged points, bike rides through the forest ecosystems where they can admire the flora and fauna, watching the fauna from the existing observatories, visiting the churches in the area, etc.



Figure 2. Recreational activities

Source: own photo

Another activity that visitors can do is watching birds from the existing observatory in this park, which is declared at the international level: Area of Avifaunistic Importance (mulberry meadow biodiversity).

Thanks to the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that ensure good living conditions, we meet more than 200 species of birds that are mostly protected as seen in figure 3.



Figure 3. The protected birds of the Lunca Mureșului Natural Park

Source: own photo

In the analyzed park, as can be seen in figures 3 and 4, there are several information panels with the protected bird species but also with the fish species existing in the aquatic ecosystem).



Figure 4. The species of fish found in aquatic ecosystems

Source: own photo

The existence of forest ecosystems in which many woody and grassy plants can be observed (figure 5), many of them being protected species, makes it possible to carry out hikes where nature lovers can admire the forest, the Mureș River and all the beauties of the protected area. Ecotourism marketing provides visitors with information that can lead them to respect the natural and cultural environment of the areas, also leading to increased tourist satisfaction [15].

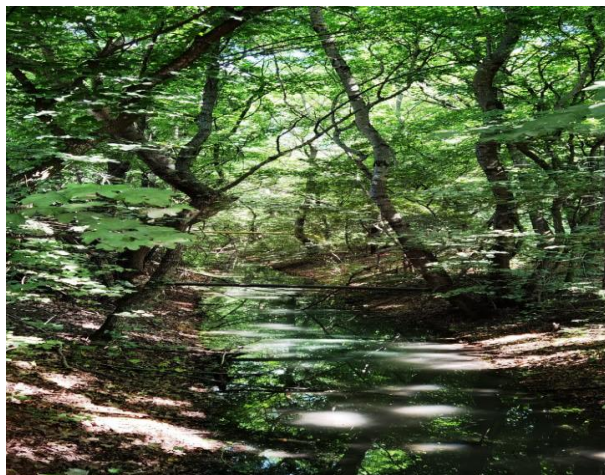


Figure 5. Forest ecosystem

Source: own photo

The preservation of biodiversity in protected areas is extremely important, and in order to protect the flora and fauna, visitors must inform themselves and follow certain rules when visiting these areas, for example: do not cut trees, do not capture certain species of birds, reptiles, amphibians, etc., to fish only in the places and periods allowed, to camp only in the existing parking lots, not to throw garbage on the ground but only in the places specially arranged by those who administer the park, to respect the existing markings and routes and not to carry out activities that they can pollute water, soil, air.



Figure 6. Aquatic ecosystem-Mureș River

Source: own photo

The beauty of the landscape and the activities organized in the Lunca Mureșului Natural Park (figure 6) attract visitors, but the conservation of biodiversity must be a priority as well as the education of tourists visiting the protected areas.

CONCLUSIONS

In Romania there are many destinations where tourists can enjoy the advantages of ecological tourism, one of them is the Lunca Mureșului Natural Park.

In the studied area we noticed that visitors can practice many recreational activities that can have a negative impact on the flora and fauna of the area.

Nature-loving tourists must be aware of the impact of their activities in these protected areas, must reduce pollution and all activities that destroy existing ecosystems.

It is very important that those who manage natural parks in protected areas respect the existing regulations and management plans and promote eco-tourism for the conservation of ecosystems.

The protection of the environment must be encouraged and promoted by making available to tourists who visit the protected areas informative panels and means of transport that reduce pollution in the analyzed areas.

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