

Visiting parks in Slovakia and Bulgaria



Visiting the High Tatras National Park, Slovakia
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"I learned to identify animal tracks"
"I saw the impact humans have on forests"
"We learned to protect forests"
"I learned how to be a good ecologist"
Thoughts shared by students at the end of the camp

Project team members travelled in March to Slovakia and in May to Bulgaria for an exchange of experience with protected areas with similar biodiversity and management challenges. The visit included in Slovakia the High Tatras National Park and the Slovensky Raj National Park, and in Bulgaria the Central Balkans National Park and the Roussenski Lom Nature Reserve. In both countries the programme included presentations and discussions on issues related to biodiversity conservation and participatory protected area management. In addition, the hosts

organised field trips to demonstrate the challenges they are confronted with and the solutions found. Much appreciated were in particular the ingenious methods used in these parks to promote natural values through education and tourism. These visits were also an opportunity for learning and reflection on the achievements of the administration of Rodna Mountains NP - a much



Field trip in the Central Balkans National Park, Bulgaria
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Presentations and discussions
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younger institution than its Slovakian and Bulgarian counterparts. Our project received great interest, with the Central Balkans NP wishing to collaborate with the Rodna Mountains NP to organise exchange summer camps for students from communities adjacent to the two parks.

Darwin Clubs Camps - 4th edition

The fourth edition of the Darwin Clubs student camp was organised between 8-12 July 2007 at the Valea Secii lodge in the Anieş Valley, on the southern side of the Rodna Mountains.

The students participated with great enthusiasm in thematic field trips, learned about the diversity of species and habitats found in the area and worked in teams to collect data that they went on to analyse and present to the larger group.

Discussions centred on the management plan of the Rodna Mountains NP and the use of natural resources from the park were very

animated; the students analysed carefully several cases and presented their own solutions, which they will develop into projects to be implemented in local communities together with the NGO ECO RODNA.

Educational activities were combined with entertainment, including games, contests and the much appreciated camp fires - an oppor-



Camp fire
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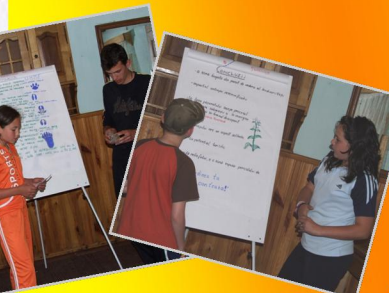
Data collection in the field
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tunity to share poems, songs and stories.

We would like to thank the club coordinators, schools and the students' parents as well as the commune of Maieru and the Rodna Forest District for their support in organizing this student camp!



Camp opening ceremony
© Tim Filipoiu



Presentations made by students
© Alina Szabo

Biodiversity monitoring



Monitoring gentians - Gentiana punctata

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Biodiversity monitoring activities in the Rodna Mountains NP are being carried out by the park administration but also in collaboration with the Darwin Clubs and various scientists.

The purpose of activities undertaken with the clubs is to get the students to experience nature, to learn to love and protect it, but at the same time they represent a way of collecting

scientific data based on standard protocols and monitoring sheets; each monitoring plot was demarcated in the field and signposted with information boards. This participatory process also contributes to improving decision-

making regarding natural resources from the park by including local knowledge and experience.

Monitoring with the help of scientists were focused on the Corongiş area which, due to its outstanding biodiversity value, is in the process of being declared a scientific reserve.



Forest monitoring activities
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Monitoring pasture diversity
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The field guide is an important contribution being the only one of its kind in Romania and one of the few guides available in Romanian!

New! Field guide to representative species from the Rodna Mountains NP

The first field guide to representative species from the Rodna Mountains NP is close to being published! The guide will include images and descriptions of several species of plants and animals widely found in this protected area and selected from more than 3300 that have been censused so far. This publication was developed in order to facilitate easy identification of common

species and it targets non-specialist visitors to the park who wish to learn more about the natural values found here.

In addition to information on species, the field guide includes data on habitats and altitude where species could be found, the flowering period for plants and a brief description of the park and its aims.

This guide is the result of the authors' efforts but also of work undertaken by the Darwin Clubs who collected biodiversity data; in particular, we thank members of the club established at the "Corneliu Baba" Arts Highschool in Bistriţa, who made wonderful drawings of species for which photographs were not available.



Rodna Mtns. NP & local communities

The future of this national park depends on the knowledge and capacity of the team who administers it, but also, perhaps even to a greater degree, on the way local people perceive its role.

The administration of the Rodna Mountains NP developed a first draft of the management plan for the park following a participatory process of meetings and discussion with various stakeholders. This plan is the basis

on which all decisions regarding natural resource management in the park will be made in the next five years. It also includes an action plan which aims to protect nature but also to encourage the persistence of the rich and unique cultural inheritance found in this region.

The park councils - Consultativ and Scientific - will meet in October to discuss the final version of this document.

To gather local people's opinion on the park and its management between September and December a series of presentations will be held in local communities and schools; in addition a questionnaire survey will be undertaken as well. Many thanks to all those who will participate in these activities!



Traditional costumes typical for the Someş area (above) and Maramureş region (below).