

Implications of Philately in Promoting the Protected Natural Areas (IV): Regarding the Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park, Romania

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INFORMATION

Article history

Received 09 August 2020

Revised 27 November 2020

Accepted 29 November 2020

Available 15 December 2020

Keywords

Biodiversity

Special conservation area

Domogled-Cerna Valley National Park

Natural heritage

Philately

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ABSTRACT

Romania is a blessed place with many areas of unique beauty, with a special richness in species of fauna and flora - as part of the natural heritage, and places where the spectacle of nature delights your eyes and take your breath with every step. Constantly promoting philatelic themes that use natural wealth and the beauty of our country as subjects, the administrative entity (with various names over time) responsible for issuing postage stamps performs a series of postage stamps in whose images are found rarities of flora and fauna, a miracle of nature. To show that protected natural areas have a special beauty, and to make them known to everyone, in this paper, we bring to the discussion the most significant philatelic peculiarities in the Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park. In this context, a series of the most diverse pieces and philatelic effects are brought into the discussion (stamps, envelopes, first-day covers, postcards, illustrated postcards, maximum postcards), to outline the whole set of geological, pedological and ecological features in the considered area.

1. Introduction

Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park is a protected area of national interest that corresponds to the second category IUCN (national park, special conservation area), located in the southwestern part of Romania, on the territories of Caraș-Severin, Mehedinți and Gorj counties (Anon, 2020a; 2020b).

The natural area is located in the central-eastern part of Caraș-Severin county (on the administrative territories of Cornereva, Mehadia, Teregova, Topleț and Zăvoi communes and of Băile Herculane city), the north-western part of Gorj county (on Padeș commune and Tismana city) and in the northeast of Mehedinți County (on the territories



of Balta, Isverna, Obârșia-Cloșani and Podeni communes) and is to be crossed by the national road 66 A, to connect Hunedoara and Caraș Severin counties, as it can be observed in Fig. 1 (Anon, 2020c; Anon, 2020d).

The park is a mountainous area with a great geological and geomorphological diversity (karst relief with sharp peaks, towers, needles, limestone ridges, caves, quays, valleys, forests, and meadows), which has several types of habitats (Anon, 2020a; 2020c). The first proposal for the establishment of the Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park took place in 1990, and it will be declared a protected area by Law no. 5 of March 6, 2000 (on the approval of the National Spatial Planning Plan - Section III - protected areas) (LAW, 2020). In 2003, by Government Decision no. 230 of 4 March (DEC, 2003) (on the delimitation of biosphere reserves,

national parks, and natural parks and the establishment of their administrations) restores its boundaries and area.

From a geographical point of view, the park stretches over the Cerna river basin, from its source to the confluence with the Belareca river, over the massif of Godeanu Mountains and Cerna Mountains on the right slope, respectively Vâlcanului and Mehedinți Mountains on the left slope. The surface of the Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park is of 61,211 ha and is comprised between the northern latitudes of 44° 50' 10" and 45° 16' 50", and the eastern longitudinal latitudes of 22° 23' 50" and 22° 51' 35". Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park is located in the east of Caraș-Severin county, occupying an area of 23,185 ha, in the west of Mehedinți county occupying 8,220 ha, and in the west of Gorj county with an area of 29,806 ha.

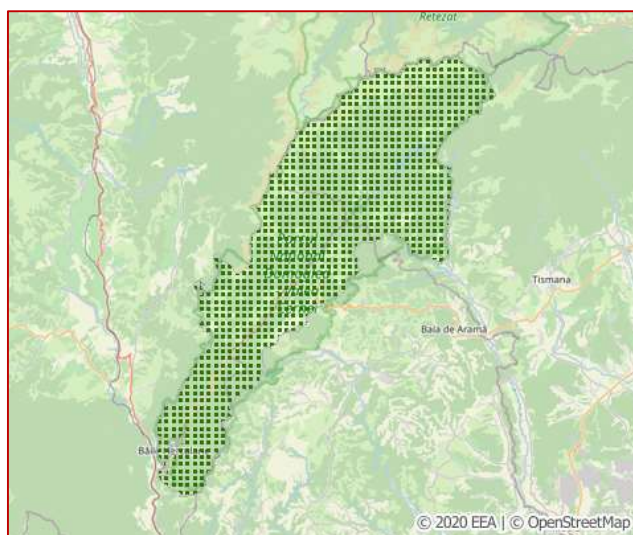


Fig. 1. Reference area of Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park, Romania (Anon, 2020c)

2. Material and Method

The documentation for this paper started from the authors' concerns for environmental education and environmental protection (Pop et al., 2017; Mesaroș et al., 2018) and not least, because they love the idea of a harmoniously developed community, with care for protected areas and the biodiversity that populates them (Cioruța et al., 2018; Pop et al., 2018). Having at hand a series of extremely relevant studies at the national level, both in terms of the management of protected areas (Stanciu and Florescu 2009; Rațiu, 2017; GEO, 2020) and the philatelic issues published in catalogues and journals (Tudor, 2017; Scăiceanu, 2018), the authors decided to extrapolate those approaches to the relatively limited space of the existing ecosystem in Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park.

The subject of the study, in the form of a philatelic circuit of Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park, is based on the sites that host philatelic content such as Colnect, Delcampe, eBay, Okazii, PicClick, Stamp World, wopa-plus, etc., which come in addition to discussion forums and online meetings with other collectors and passionate philatelists. The study is

based on the pieces and philatelic effects identified in the sites mentioned above, which come in various forms (stamps, FDCs, envelopes, illustrated postcards, maximum postcards, postal covers, etc.) and which illustrate various aspects of the area. considered (relief, geology, pedology, biodiversity, etc.).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Domogled-Cerna Valley National Park from an ecological perspective

Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park is a mountainous area (with rocks, limestone cliffs, peaks, sinkholes, lapis lazuli, caves, oaks, rubble, gorges, waterfalls, meadows, and forests) in the area which includes the Coronini - Bedina nature reserves, Domogled Reservation, Iardașita, Iauna - Craiova, Bârzoni Cave, Corcoaiei Gorges, Ciucevele Cernei, Cloșanilor's Stone, Stan's Peak and Țesna Valley (Anon, 2020a; 2020b). The natural area has several types of habitats-beech forests of *Symphyto-Fagion*, *Asperulo-Fagetum* and *Cephalanthero-Fagion*, alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*, acidophilous forests of *Picea abies* in the mountain region, acion forests on steep slopes, alpine and

boreal scrub, alpine and subalpine calcareous meadows, Pannonian rocky meadows, calcareous scrub meadows, edging communities with high hygrophilous grasses from the plains to the mountainous and alpine to the siliceous mountain in the alpine, mountain meadows, caves where

public access is forbidden, rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation on limestone rocks, sub-Mediterranean forest vegetation that shelter a diverse range of flora and fauna specific to the Carpathian chain of the Retezat-Godeanu Mountains (Anon, 2020a; 2020b).

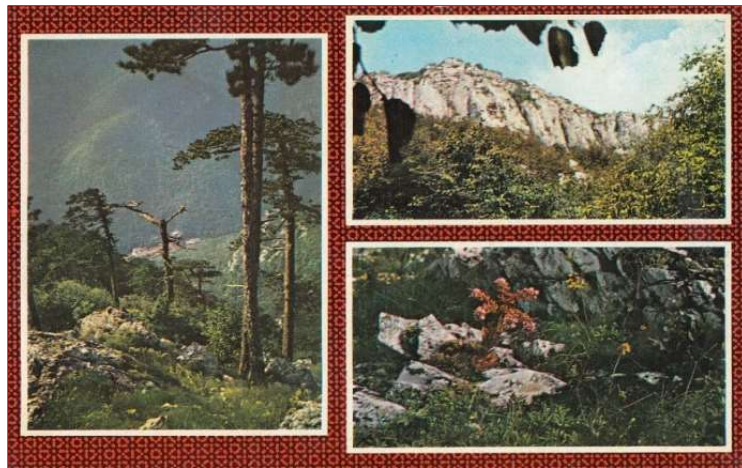


Fig. 2. Illustrated postcard “Băile Herculane. Domogled Nature Reserve”

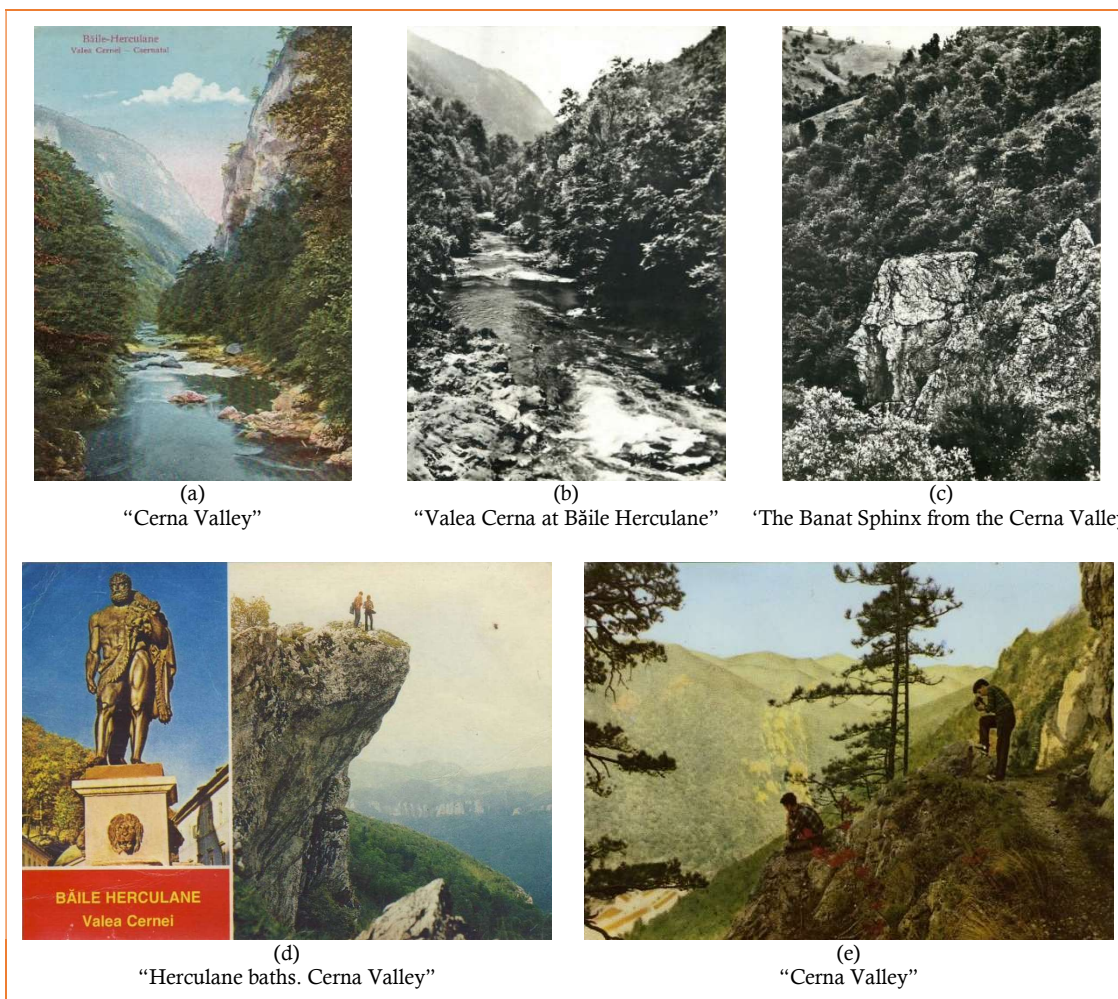


Fig. 3. Illustrated postcards referring to the Domogled - Cerna Valley are

The national park overlaps both the site of Domogled - Cerna Valley community importance area and the special protection avifauna area of the same name (Anon, 2020c; Anon, 2020d), based on the designation of several faunal and floristic species listed in Annex Ia of European Council Directive 92/43/EC of 21 May 1992 (on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora). The protected fauna of the park consists of (Anon, 2020a; 2020b):

- 14 species of mammals: brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), lynx (*Lynx lynx*), river otter (*Lutra lutra*), long-winged bat (*Miniopterus schreibersi*), large horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*), the brick bat (*Myotis emarginatus*), the big-eared bat (*Myotis bechsteini*), the horseshoe bat of Blasius (*Rhinolophus blasii*), the Mediterranean bat (*Rhinolophus euryale*), the small horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), the bat with

mouse ears (*Myotis blythii*) and the bat with long legs (*Myotis capaccinii*);

- a reptile and an amphibian: the land tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) and the yellow-bellied ivory (*Bombina variegata*);
- six species of fish: the ford pig (*Gobio uranoscopus*), the woodpecker (*Cottus gobio*), the stingray (*Sabanejewia aurata*), the avat (*Aspius aspius*), the eggplant (*Barbus meridionalis*) and the squid (*Eudontomyzon danfordi*);
- 22 species of invertebrates, among which we mention the short-winged beetle (*Oxyporus mannerheimii*), the golden beetle (*Buprestis splendens*), the beetle (*Carabus variolosus*), the Transylvanian moth (*Pholidoptera transsylvanica*), the beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), the large tailor of the oak (*Cerambyx cerdo*), the alpine tailor (*Rosalia alpina*), etc.



Fig. 4. The souvenir sheet of the "Natural Parks in Romania", 17.08.2018, Bucharest



Fig. 5. The FDCs of the "Natural Parks in Romania", 17.08.2018, Bucharest

At the level of grasses, there are three species of plants (Anon, 2020a; 2020b): the lady's slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus*), the poplar eggs (*Himantoglossum caprinum*) and the mountain bell (*Campanula serrata*), which vegetates along with other floristic rarities, among which: bear's foot (*Acanthus longifolius*), sea-grass (*Achnatherum calamagrostis*), Boiler bells (*Campanula crassipes*), strawberry (*Cephalanthera*

damasonium), mountain carnation (*Dianthus pestal*), motley tulip (*Fritillaria orientalis*), the forest lily (*Linum uninerve*), etc.

3.2. Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park from a cartophilatelic perspective

From a postal-philatelic point of view, the research

undertaken on the main e-commerce sites with philatelic content (Colnect, Delcampe, PicClick, Stamp World, wopaplus, etc.) led us to identify the pieces reproduced in Fig. 2 (Anon, 2020e) and Fig. 3a-e (Anon, 2020f; 2020g; 2020h; 2020i; 2020j). Romfilatelia, a permanent promoter of philatelic themes that have as subject the undisputed beauties of Romania, introduced into circulation the issue of postage stamps “Natural Parks of Romania”, stopping for the mo-

ment in the Domogled - Cerna Valley Natural Park2 (Anon, 2020k; Antonache, 2020). On the stamp of the lacy package of the issue with a face value of 28.50 lei (Fig. 4), is shown *Zamenis longissimus*, also called the Aesculapian Snake, which, wrapped on a stick, is the symbol of medicine (Anon, 2020k). Aesculapian snake is a non-venomous snake in the family *Colubridae*. The length of this specimen can reach up to 2 m.



Fig. 6. The official maxicards for "Natural Parks in Romania", 17.08.2018, Bucharest



Fig. 6. Other maxicards for "Natural Parks in Romania", 19.11.2018, Băile Herculane

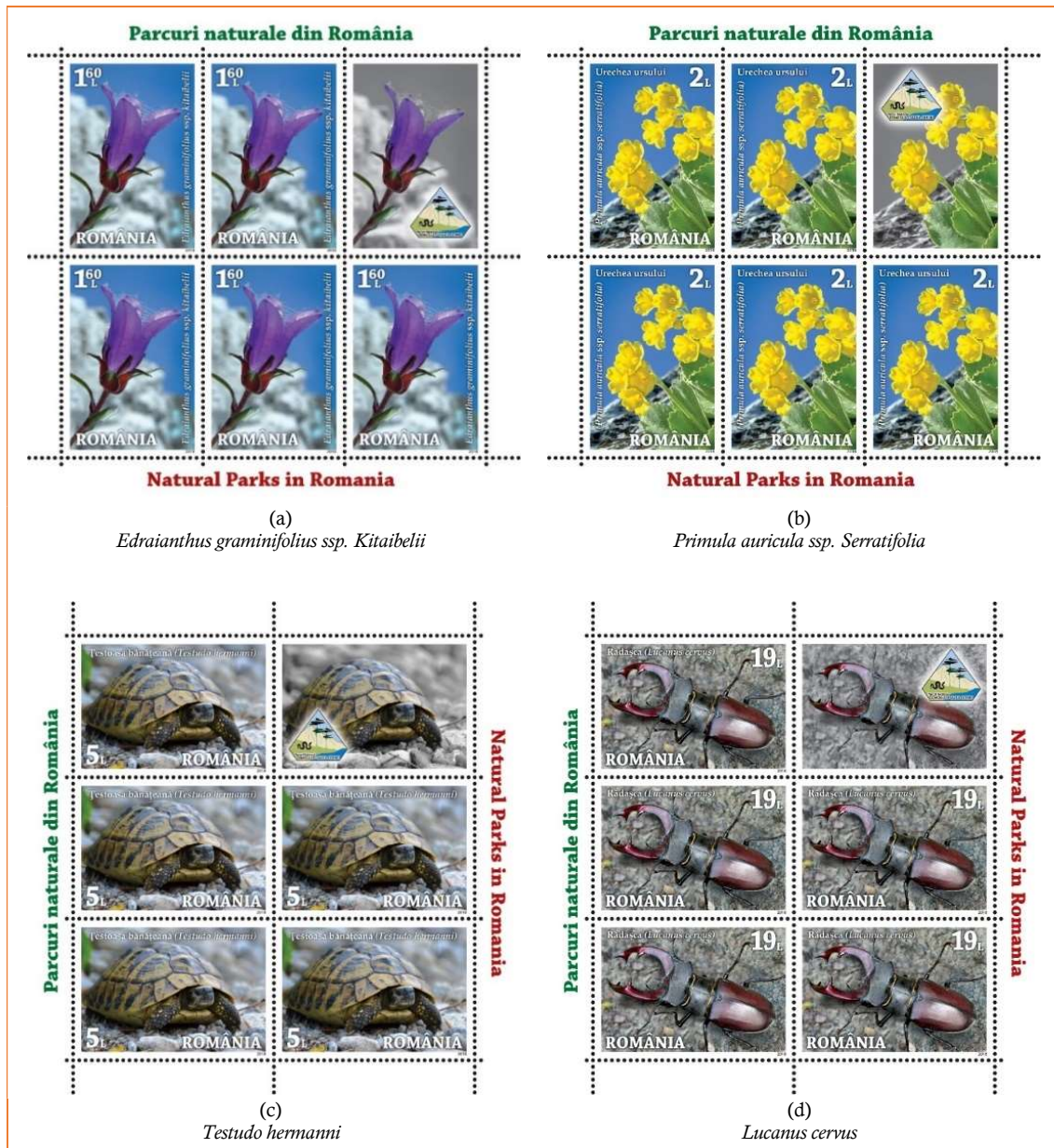


Fig. 7. The 4-stamps blocks of the "Natural Parks in Romania", 17.08.2018, Bucharest

It has a slender appearance, small and narrow head, long and thin tail. The back is brown with many scales, long with white stripes. When caught, it quickly gets angry and bites, hence being called in some areas "bad snake". The issue of postage stamps is completed by the set of two FDCs – first-day covers (Fig. 5), the set of four maximum postcards (Fig. 6) + other , and as layout forms were used the sheet of 32 stamps, the mini-sheet of 5 stamps + 1 vignette, and the block of 4 stamps in philatelic album (Fig. 7) (Anon, 2020k; Antonache, 2020).

The philatelic album is made in a limited edition of 245 copies and is equipped with the special block of the issue (containing four lacy stamps with illustrated cuff), as well as the envelope "first day" with the stamp "first day" clearly applied with folio, both products being numbered from 001 to 245. In addition to the official maxims, other maximum

postcards were identified, made in private regime by passionate collectors and philatelists. Some of the them are shown in Fig. 7 (Mateescu, 2019).

Edraianthus graminifolius ssp. kitaibelii (Fig. 7a) is a xeromesophilic species, which grows as a perennial herbaceous plant. The plants are low and their stems can be from 1 cm to a maximum of 20 cm (Anon, 2020k). The leaves are alternately arranged on the stem, and the lower ones are mainly petiolate. The blue-purple flowers are individually grouped, bell-shaped and hermaphroditic. Due to the small area in which it can be found, this species is protected (Fig. 7a).

Primula auricula ssp. Serratifolia (Fig. 7b) also called the Banat Cuckoo's Cube or the Bear's Ear, it is among the species with the highest phytogeographic value in the *Primulaceae* family,

representing an endangered taxon (Anon, 2020k). It usually blooms from April to the end of May. It is a perennial species that grows up to 20 cm in height. Yellow flowers grow in clusters on stems 5-20 cm long. The specific epithet auricle means "ear-shaped" and refers to the shape of the leaves.

Testudo hermanni (Fig. 7c) belongs to the *Testudinae* family and is characterized by the carapace of 12-24 cm, which is convex, yellow-brown with dark spots (Anon, 2020k). A tortoise can easily reach 25-30 cm in diameter at maturity and 2-3 kg in weight. In optimal living conditions they can live even over 75 years.

Lucanus cervus (Fig. 7d), known as the radish, it is a beetle in

the *Lucanidae* family. Is also one of the largest and most remarkable beetles in Europe (Anon, 2020k). Characteristic are the large, reddish mandibles of the male, which resemble deer antlers and can be moved like pliers. In large specimens, the length of the horns can reach almost half of the total length of the beetle, which is 25-75 mm. Regarding the technical characteristics of the "Natural Parks in Romania", they have been summarized in Table 1, and refer to stamps, as well as the block and souvenir sheet (Anon, 2020k; Antonache, 2020).

The philatelic album is created into a limited edition (only 245 pieces) and is equipped with the special bloc of the issue, as well as the FDCs.

Table 1. Technical characteristics for stamps of the "Natural Parks in Romania", 17.08.2018, Bucharest

Technical characteristics	Values and other observations
Date of issue	17.08.2018
Number of values	5 (4 stamps + 1 perforated souvenir sheet)
Stamp/Block/Minisheet size	33×48 mm/112×152 mm/115×118 mm
Page composition	In sheet of 32 stamps, minisheet of 5 stamps + 1 label with illustrated border and block of 4 imperforated stamps
Printing system	Offset, in 4 colours on chromo-gummed paper - UK origin
Run printing	68,280 stamps - 38,400 in sheets of 32 stamps, 24,600 in minisheets of 5 stamps + 1 label with illustrated border (4,920 minisheets) and 980 in blocks of 4 imperforated stamps (245 blocks) and 4,300 in perforated souvenir sheets
Designer	Mihai Vămășescu
FDC	470 sets (2 covers) equipped with the postage stamps of the issue, numbered and cancelled with the „first day” postmark
Listing	2207(set), 2207a (perforated souvenir sheet), and 2207b (philatelic album)

4. Conclusion

In the paper, we bring to the fore the area of Domogled - Cerna Valley National Park both from an ecological point of view - by presenting the species of flora and fauna in the form of a short inventory, and philatelic point of view - by analyzing, describing and disseminating the main pieces identified in within philatelic content e-commerce sites. We were impressed by the way in which over time the Romanian postal administration via Romfilatelia decided to promote protected natural areas, the pieces identified being of a rare beauty, especially those made in 2018, as part of the philatelic project "Natural Parks in Romania".

Competing Interests

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Authors' Contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between authors. BVC and ALP designed the study, performed the literature searches, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. CM managed the analyses of the study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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