

E. N. MIKHALKINA, G. G. YERMAKOVA

**SPECIALLY PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS  
AS A STANDARD OF THE UNTOUCHED NATURE**

*Gomel State University of Francisk Skorina, Republic of Belarus  
mihalkina.e@gmail.com, galina7317@gmail.com*

An important role in the preservation of landscape diversity belongs to the Specially Protected Natural Areas (SPNAs), which include parks, wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and natural monuments. These areas are defined by the Law of the Republic of Belarus "About the Specially Protected Natural Areas" as part of the territory of the Republic of Belarus with the unique, high standard or other valuable natural complexes and objects that have special ecological, scientific and aesthetic values, for which a special regime of protection and use has been established [1].

As of December 1, 2013 the system of the SPNAs of the Republic of Belarus includes 1202 objects. The total area of the protected areas is 1569,1 thousand ha or, in other words, 7,5 % of the area of the country, including the area of protected areas of the national significance of 1349,5 thousand ha or 7,1 % of the area of the republic. Wildlife sanctuaries (zakazniki) of the national importance account for 54,4 % of the total area of the protected areas.

Natural areas with international protection status represent a particular importance for biodiversity. Berezinsky Biosphere Nature Reserve and National Park "Belovezhskaya Pushcha" have European Diploma of the Specially Protected Natural Areas and the status of biosphere reserves of Europe. The National Park "Belovezhskaya Pushcha" was included in the list of the World Natural Heritage. Furthermore, the National Landscape wildlife sanctuaries (zakazniki) "Olmanski wamp", "Middle Pripyat", "Prostyr", "Kotra", "Osveysky", "Yelnya" and biological wildlife sanctuaries "Sporovsky" and "Zvanets" are included in the list of wetlands of international importance [3].

10 important plant areas, as well as 48 areas that are important for the protection of wild birds (IBA), 27 of which now have the status of protected areas, are considered to be important for biodiversity conservation. Most of the IBA are important habitats for birds, which are threatened globally: ferruginous duck, white-tailed eagle, greater spotted eagle, corncrake, snipe, aquatic warbler. It is expected that all of the se areas will have the status of the protected areas of the national or local significance in the future [2].

Wildlife sanctuaries (zakazniki) are included into the priority category of the protected areas in the country, which account for 68,8 % of the total area of the protected territories (1107,3 thousand ha). Wildlife sanctuaries of the national significance occupy 4,0 % of the country and 52,9 % of the total area of the protected territories. This category of the protected areas has 31 landscape wildlife sanctuaries, 38 biological and 15 hydrological sanctuaries; they cover an area of 643,7; 119,8 and 71,0 thousand ha respectively.

The SPNAs provide preservation of genetic resources and serve as centers of reproduction of flora and fauna. Within the boundaries of protected areas about 80 % of rare and endangered species of plants, about 30 % of the identified locus there of, about 90 % of rare and endangered species of wild animals and more than 50 % of the identified habitats are saved [4].

The placement of the SPNAs within the country is uneven. The largest areas of the territories that have protected status are in the Brest region and account for 451,4 thousand ha, or 13,6 % of the territory. Vitebsk is in the second place (354 thousand ha or 8,7 %). The Mogilev region is quite different with its minimum proportion of the protected areas of 66 thousand ha or 2,2 %.

## References

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