

THE SUMMARY OF THE PhD THESIS

Nature reserves of the Podkarpackie Province – creation and functioning

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Since at least the nineteenth century, sites with the best preserved natural values, referred to as nature reserves, have been protected in the world. However, this process was not well understood in the research area.

The paper presents comprehensive knowledge about the creation and functioning of nature reserves within the Podkarpackie Province, with particular emphasis on the years 1918–1960, and analyzes the most important elements related to their management, including their protection.

It was assumed that the nature reserve is a legal form of nature protection, which consists of three inseparable parts: 1) natural values; 2) legal bases of operation; 3) human activities, i.e. the entirety of work aimed at creating the reserve and then implementing its protection, but also anthropopressure. The work is interdisciplinary, which is due to the fact that a number of activities in the field of nature protection are anchored in the legal system and cannot be considered in isolation from it, moreover, nature protection is implemented in a specific natural environment and economic conditions, encountering various social reactions.

Exploratory studies were carried out to describe the formation and development process of a network of nature reserves in the Podkarpackie Province. Qualitative empirical research was carried out using research methods and techniques used in natural sciences, environmental and landscape history, and historical ecology. The most important ones included the study of documents as well as the analysis and criticism of the literature, which constitute the basis for the descriptions made and conclusions drawn.

Six objects of a character of nature reserves have been identified and described – the so-called "Galician Podkarpackie Reserves" – which were under deliberate protection or extensive use in the times of Galicia. However, it is difficult to clearly indicate the reasons for this action, which resulted only from the will of the owner. These objects were situated on private estates and one in the forests of a Catholic monastery. At that time five objects were indicated as planned for protection, with different natural values. At the same time, research has shown that at the beginning of the 20th century in Galicia, the

concept of a nature reserve was developed in Polish scientific publications, the press or social life. In this way, the achievements of the period of Galicia for the development of nature reserves were highlighted.

In this work 16 existing reserves were presented, including 11 with legal protection and 5 with voluntary protection, which functioned in the period of the Second Polish Republic. In addition, 17 planned reserves and 7 objects of undetermined status from this period. It was established whether the then existing reserves constitute the so-called ancient forests. Protected species and ecosystems were identified. Serious problems of a formal nature were encountered, because throughout the interwar period, no clear legal provisions regulating the status of nature reserves were created, which was the cause of problems related to the identity of these objects and their protection.

The process of creating nature reserves after World War II, in the period 1949-2020, was presented, which highlights the reactivation of most reserves from the Second Polish Republic in the decade of the 1950s and the decade of the 1990s, when over 34% of the total number and nearly 65% of the total area of post-war reserves were established, and actions significantly modifying the model of existing protection were undertaken. The methods of protection of the reserves used over the years were presented, indicating, i.a. strict protection scope. The most important postulates concerning the currently existing reserves in the context of the ongoing climate change were identified.

An important role of the reserves was to supply the area of the Bieszczady National Park, the borders of which include 10 objects with an area of over 1078 hectare; they accounted for over 9% of the total number and nearly 9% of the total area of post-war reserves.

The results presented in the work show that the key element is the continuity of the existence of some reserves, which can be traced from the period of Galicia or the Second Polish Republic to the present day; in these places, cultural and historical values joined the natural values.