

Biodiversity of Paklenica National Park as a prerequisite for the development of special types of tourism

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Biodiversity as a particularity of the Park

Paklenica National Park was established in 1949 as the second national park in Croatia, after the National Park of Plitvice Lakes. The richness of flora and fauna is the distinctive feature or fundamental heritage of Paklenica NP with numerous endemics, which originate from the last glacial period. The flora of the Park is made up of about 1110 species and subspecies, which form a peculiar and varied vegetation with a large number of endemic species (67). Its fauna is rich and varied, with particular emphasis on the endemism of speleofauna. The largest biological attraction of the park is a rich ornitofauna with the recorded 225 species of birds. Large beasts have also been found in the park, such as bear, wolf, wild cat and lynx. Pristine nature and great biodiversity are the primary motives of visitors. Since 2016, wildlife tourguiding has been practiced, with a special focus on birdwatching. Further activities are observation of plants, butterflies, speleophagens, mammals (observation of the chamois). In order to improve the quality of wildlife tourism in NP Paklenica, an internal wildlife guidebook has been written. Educational workshops on flora and fauna of the park are also organized, as 65.81% of all the visitors are hikers.

The aim of the research and the methodology

The aim of this research is to explore the extent to which biodiversity influences the Park's attendance and the development of the specific types of tourism in the Park's area. In order to test the influence of biodiversity as the paradigm/prerequisite of the tourism development, it is necessary to analyse all the Paklenica NP biodiversity factors and explore the visitors' views and the way in which the biodiversity of the Park influences the development of different forms of tourism. In doing so, a survey was used as a primary form of the empirical research of this paper. A survey research has been conducted by using a structured survey questionnaire on a sample of 359 respondents (N=359). On the basis of a structured questionnaire which included a set of closed and open ended questions, a face-to-face interview was used as the method of data collection. The survey consists of a total of 31 questions. The first 11 questions are close-ended and relate to a socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second part of the survey questionnaire concerns the Park's biodiversity. It consists of 20 claims followed by a 7-item Likert scale according to which the respondents express their level of agreement or disagreement with a certain claim.

Survey on the biodiversity of the Park

The survey contains 20 claims regarding the Park's landscape diversity, and the answers range from 1 (Strongly agree) to 7 (Strongly disagree). The answers are expressed in percentages (Table 1). The variations of the responses are different and are expressed in percentages. Most respondents (44%) answered that they fully agree on the outstanding biodiversity of the park, and agree or generally agree. Considering the presentation and accessibility of the fauna diversity, most respondents (28%) fully agree, 24% agree and 25%

mostly agree. The following are the statements in which the respondents fully agree with about 20%, or one fifth: "The flora diversity is well presented and accessible"; "Considerable investments are needed to develop bird watching tourism"; "Wildlife tourism is a long term perspective of tourism in the Park"; "Watching the vegetation is particularly interesting"; "The co-operation of all subjects (local community, travel agencies ...) affecting tourist attractions is good"; "It is necessary to develop a tourism product park that will bring a more diversified offer and thus attract new visitors"; "Tourism growth needs to be controlled to stop unwanted nature devastation"; "We feel that we can have a positive impact on the decisions of the Park authorities about the activities in the Park. Worth remarking is the claim where only 16% of respondents fully agree that endemic species are priceless treasure of the Park, or that bird world is exceptionally interesting for observation. The largest number of variations in the responses were the following: "Wildlife Tourism is a long-term perspective of tourism in the park"; "Mammals are extremely interesting for observation." "Ecotourism is a long-term perspective of tourism in the park". Obviously, in the promotion of wildlife tourism, bird watching tourism and ecotourism, more or better effort should be invested, either through various types of education or in some other ways. The responses confirm the hypothesis "The biodiversity of Paklenica National Park is not adequately valued as a tourism development paradigm", and they also suggest that this issue should be systematically addressed. Thus, wildlife tourism as the primary motivation for the visit is claimed by 18% of respondents, 24% of respondents are interested in this form of tourism, while 40% of respondents would like to attend the education program on flora and fauna.

References

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Table 1. Survey on the biodiversity of the Park

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Expressed in %	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. The park is in small space exceptional biodiversity.	0	2	8	10	12	23	44
2. The flora diversity is well presented and accessible	0	0	5	27	25	24	19
3. Faunal richness is well displayed and available	0	0	7	19	21	25	28
4. The bird world is very interesting to observe	0	8	10	10	25	31	16
5. Considerable investments are needed to develop bird watching tourism	0	4	10	19	24	21	22
6. Wildlife tourism is a long term perspective of tourism in the Park	2	2	7	28	25	18	18
7. Ecotourism is a long-term perspective of tourism in the park	0	5	5	31	26	16	17
8. Mammals (bear, wolf, and lynx) are extremely interesting for observation	10	3	9	16	19	26	17
9. Watching the vegetation is particularly interesting	0	3	12	22	21	21	21
10. Endemic species are priceless treasures of the park.	2	4	5	24	18	31	16
11. I was very impressed with forest communities.	0	5	9	18	27	23	18
12. The co-operation of all subjects (local community, travel agencies ...) affecting tourist attractions is good.	0	0	4	26	25	26	19
13. We feel that we can have a positive impact on the decisions of the Park authorities about the activities in the Park.	0	0	9	19	28	22	22
14. It is necessary to develop a tourism product park that will bring a more diversified offer and thus attract new visitors.	0	5	7	14	39	14	21
15. It is necessary to carry out additional assessments of impact on thresholds and reception capacities in relation to existing infrastructure.	2	0	10	20	33	14	21
16. Tourism growth needs to be controlled to stop unwanted nature devastation.	2	4	12	14	26	23	19