

Protecting & Evaluating Geoheritage in Slovenia – Today's Issues & Challenges

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Abstract

Although Slovenia is a small country, it boasts with well-preserved diversity in natural and cultural resources. Many merits go to the first conscious and forward-looking individuals, which at the end of 19th century came up with the idea of protecting the worthiest parts of nature; one example is the proposition for protection of the Triglav lakes valley, handed by A. Belar in 1908 to Austro-Hungarian government.

Today, the worthiest parts of nature on the territory of Slovenia are protected under the Nature Conservation Act (NCA) and other accompanying regulations. NCA acknowledges two pillars of nature conservation: (1) natural valuable features protection preservation, and (2) biodiversity. Preservation of biodiversity is mostly provided through Natura 2000 network and analogous approaches, while protection of natural valuable features covers the entire natural heritage in Slovenia. In nature these represent: palaeontological sites, karstic and glacier phenomena, waterfalls, lakes, forests, botanic parks... By the NCA they are sorted in different categories: geological, geomorphological, hydrological, dendrological, zoological, botanical, ecosystemic, designed and valuable landscape, minerals and fossils.

Understandably, not all natural phenomena are protected as natural valuable features. To be recognized and protected as a natural valuable feature a natural phenomenon has to meet certain defined criteria; it has to be either: extraordinary, rare, typical, preserved, of scientific or other appointed importance. According to NCA is the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation (IRSNC) to carry out the process of recognition of natural valuable features - known as »evaluation«, and the Minister to designate them.

Currently, the IRSNC expert group is preparing an expert report about more detailed criteria for geomorphological natural phenomena. The challenge is to set the defined criteria in a way that they: (a) enable us to distinguish valuable natural phenomena from the ordinary ones, (b) ensure that all valuable natural phenomena are included, and (c) are in accordance with current laws and regulations.

Another, more complex issue the group has been dealing with is how to incorporate the concept of geodiversity into Slovenian nature conservation system. Currently, there are bigger geomorphological and geological natural valuable features determined, but in our opinion these should be evaluated also in terms of geodiversity preservation.