

Anthropogenic and Natural Values of the Bosut River Area – a Potential Base for Geotourism Development

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Gradina on the Bosut River is an important site on the archaeological map of Europe, especially when it comes to the prehistoric period. This site is located in the western Srem region (Vojvodina, Serbia), between the villages of Vašica and Batrovci, near the Belgrade-Zagreb highway, on the route that was linking east and west from ancient times. Basically, Gradina is the artificial ellipsoid shape like rise, the size of 160 m with 60 m, which elevates ten feet above the surrounding terrain, and has dominant position and height over closer and further surroundings. Southern side is vertically cut off toward Bosut, which forms a wide curve at this point almost under a right angle. On the west side there is a mouth of a running puddle Struga, while on the northeast side there is the defensive trench- *valum* (width of 15-20 m) which surrounds this elevation and connects Bosut with Struga.

Previous research suggests that the oldest settlement belongs to the final Neolithic period. The next stratum belongs to the Eneolithic period and the next horizon to the early and middle Bronze Age. The last phase belongs to the Late and Early Iron Age. Vertical stratigraphy of sites reaches the thickness of about 6 m. The upper part has a thickness of 3.15 m and belongs to the Early Iron Age. Such powerful cultural layer that belongs to this period represents unknown and unique phenomenon in the areas of South East Europe revealing its remarkable importance and latent possibilities for further investigations in terms of material and spiritual culture of its inhabitants.

In the background of Gradina there are beautiful and valuable native stands of oak forests. It is particularly important that these forests consist of many rare or law protected species such as: *Primula vulgaris*, *Ruscus hypoglossum* and two types of orchids (*Cephalanthera longifolia*, *Neottia nidus-avis*). Ichthyofauna of aquatic ecosystems is represented with 35 species of fish. Among the amphibians, salamander represents rare and unique inhabitant. The Bosut forests have also international significance as bird habitat according to IBO project and since 1989 they were placed under protection along several smaller nature reserve areas. Bird variety of the Bosut forests is estimated to a 130 species, while 90 of them belong to nesting species. Among the most characteristic inhabitants of the forest mammals there are deer, roe deer, wild boar, hare and among the beasts - marten, weasel, brown skunk, badger and wild cat.

Changes in environmental conditions under the influence of natural and anthropogenic processes not only affected some plant and animal species causing their disappearance and decrease, but also vastly reflected on biodiversity. Only those species which had greater ability of adaptation to the changes in parts of preserved remnants of native habitat, or those that have successfully adapted to new

conditions in changing habitats prevailed in this area. In order to preserve this part of relatively intact nature and protect it from further destruction and devastation, it is necessary for people to develop high degree of awareness of the significance of nature conservation. It is also necessary to suspend process of deforestation, to slow down the spread of arable land and to limit hunting and fishing periods in order to prevent nature degradation since present statutory safeguards in most cases doesn't have major impact on unscrupulous individuals.

Linking cultural and geoheritage acquires the outstanding opportunities for development of ecotourism and educational tourism. Ecotourism in the area of Bosut forests includes both touristical and recreational activities: hiking, boating, bird watching, etc.

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