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**GEPARKS - NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE
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FLORA AND FAUNA OF THE AREA OF GEPARK ISKAR – PANEGA AND RILA MOUNTAIN

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Rila National Park
&
Geopark Iskar - Panega

What? Where?



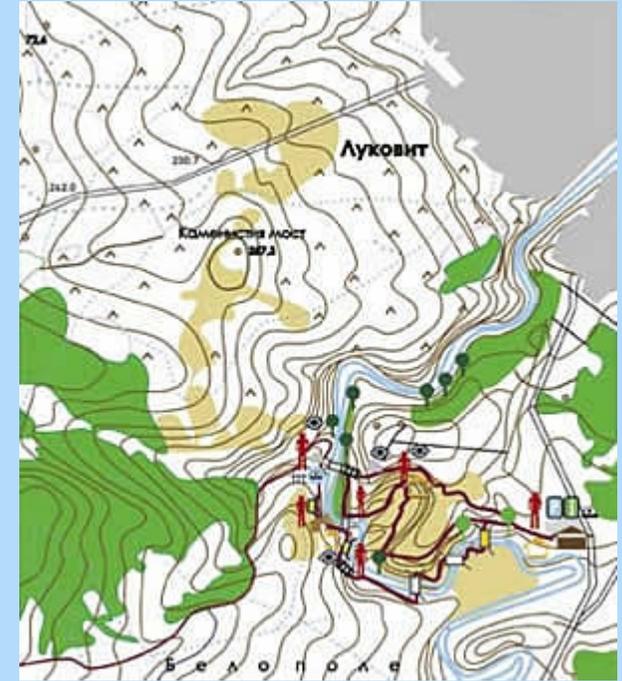
RILA NATIONAL PARK

RILA NATIONAL PARK (Bulgarian: Национален парк „Рила“) is the largest national park in Bulgaria spanning an area of 810.46 km² in the Rila mountain range in the south-west of the country. It was established on 24 February 1992 to protect several ecosystems of national importance. Its altitude varies from 800m near Blagoevgrad to 2,925m at Musala Peak, the highest summit in the Balkan Peninsula. There are 120 glacial lakes, including the prominent Seven Rila Lakes. Many rivers have their source in the national park, including the longest river entirely in the Balkans, the Maritsa, and the longest river entirely in Bulgaria, the Iskar. The national park occupies territory from 4 of the 28 provinces of the country: Sofia, Kyustendil, Blagoevgrad and Pazardzhik. It includes four nature reserves: Parangalitsa, Central Rila Reserve, Ibar and Skakavitsa. Rila National Park is among the largest and most valuable protected areas in Europe. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has listed the park as Category II.



GEPARK ISKAR-PANEGA

GEPARK ISKAR-PANEGA is on the territory of Lukovit Municipality. It includes two micro-regions - the Karlukovo karst complex and the Panega Crop Landscape Park. The Geopark is a sustainable tourist product of geological, geomorphological or paleontological sites of aesthetic or cultural-historical value. It brings together the natural and historical features of the municipality's territory, increasing their attractiveness for both locals and tourists. The Geopark as a whole product offers education and information programs that aim to raise the interest of locals and visitors from the preservation of non-living objects in the region. The main task of the Geopark is to stimulate the development of geotourism and to preserve the geological and geomorphological heritage for future generations.



Flora & Fauna

What??



What are the Flora and Fauna?

- Flora is the plant life occurring in a particular region or time, generally the naturally occurring or indigenous—native plant life.
- Fauna on the other hand, is the name given to collective animal life that lives or was once found in a certain area or time period.

Both the flora and fauna of the earth have been given sub-divisions. The flora sub-divisions are Fossil Flora, Native Flora, Agricultural Flora. And the fauna sub-divisions are Avifauna, Piscifauna, Cryptofauna, Microfauna, Megafauna. Without flora and fauna, humans cannot exist. The flora generates and releases oxygen, which is needed by the fauna for respiratory purposes. In return, the fauna produces and releases carbon dioxide, which is needed by the flora for photosynthesis. It's a symbiotic kind of relationship. In the same line, humans cannot get by without both flora and fauna.



Eurasian lynx



The Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) is a medium-sized wild cat occurring from Northern, Central and Eastern Europe to Central Asia and Siberia, the Tibetan Plateau and the Himalayas. It inhabits temperate and boreal forests up to an altitude of 5,500m. Because of its wide distribution, it has been listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List since 2008. It is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, poaching and depletion of prey. The European lynx population is estimated at comprising maximum 10,000 individuals and is considered stable.

Rhodopean Silivryak



- The Rhodopean Silivryak (*Haberlea rhodopensis* or Rhodopean chaberleia) is a representative of the Gersneriaceae family. This is a Balkan endemic, a protected relict species. Known for its long-lasting anabiotic dryness, also known as the Orpheus flower.
- Legend says that in the places where Orpheus's tears were crying, crying for his Eurydice, a blue-and-white flower has sprung up.
- It has been established that the orphan flower is a pre-glacial relic, and its existence dates back to about 2 million years ago.





Wolf

The wolf (*Canis lupus*), also known as the gray wolf, timber wolf, or tundra wolf, is a canine native to the wilderness and remote areas of Eurasia and North America. It is the largest extant member of its family, with males averaging 43–45 kg and females 36–38.5 kg. It is distinguished from other *Canis* species by its larger size and less pointed features, particularly on the ears and muzzle. The global gray wolf population is estimated to be 300,000. The gray wolf is one of the world's best-known and most-researched animals, with probably more books written about it than any other wild species. Although the fear of wolves is pervasive in many human societies, the majority of recorded attacks on people have been attributed to animals suffering from rabies. Non-rabid wolves have attacked and killed people, mainly children, but this is rare, as wolves are relatively few, live away from people, and have developed a fear of humans from hunters and shepherds.

Edelweiss



- Leontopodium is a genus of plants in the Asteraceae family (which also includes daisies and sunflowers). The genus is native to Europe and Asia. The fuzzy and somewhat stocky "petals" could be thought of as somewhat resembling lions' paws—hence the genus name combining léōn (lion) and pódiōn (foot).
- The genus includes the edelweiss, a well-known plant from the mountains of Europe. Edelweiss grows in unattainable locations in high-mountain areas. There are more than twenty species of edelweiss in the world, with only two in Europe.





European hare

The wild rabbit (*Lepus europaeus*), or European hare, is a medium-sized mammal of the Leporidae family (Leporidae). It is spread across much of Europe, including Bulgaria, as well as parts of the Middle East and Central Asia. It is transported by man in some areas of America, Australia and Oceania. Generally nocturnal and shy in nature, hares change their behaviour in the spring, when they can be seen in broad daylight chasing one another around in fields. During this spring frenzy, they sometimes strike one another with their paws ("boxing"). This is usually not competition between males, but a female hitting a male, either to show she is not yet ready to mate or as a test of his determination. The European hare is listed as being of least concern by the International Union for Conservation of Nature because it has a wide range and is moderately abundant. The hare has been a traditional symbol of fertility and reproduction in some cultures, and its courtship behaviour in the spring inspired the English idiom mad as a March hare.

Rheum rhaponticum

- *Rheum rhaponticum*, the false rhubarb, rhapontic rhubarb or rhapontic, is a plant species in the genus *Rheum* found in the wild. It is the only *Rheum* species found only in Europe, and is now restricted to the Rila mountain range in south-western Bulgaria. It was introduced to other countries in Europe. It is considered to be one of the parents of the modern culinary rhubarb. It has large, undivided leaves, with succulent petioles (stalks). The blade of the leaf is up to 50 cm long, and is wider than its length. The leaves are heart-shaped at the base with five prominent nerves. The petioles are concave above and convex below, with about 10 ridges. The flowers are borne in a panicle and are light greenish-yellow in colour. The fruits have membrane-like wings and are about 5 mm long on pedicels (stems) of the same length.



