

Bulgaria- A Biologically Diverse Nation

Bulgaria is the second most biologically diverse nation in Europe. There are more than 12,360 plant species, 3,700 of which are higher species. Of these, 763 are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria, which lists rare or endangered species.

About 750 plant types have been registered as medicinal, and 70% of these are economically valuable. The country exports about 15,000 tons of herbs each year.

The forested areas amount to about four million hectares, which is 36.85% of the territory of the country. Of the deciduous broad-leaved forests, the most widespread are oak and beech. The oak forests are in areas up to an elevation of 1,000 meters, and the beech forests are mainly in the country's central mountain ranges.

Dense forests have developed at the lower reaches of the rivers Batova, Kamchiya, Ropotamo and Veleka. Natural coniferous forests are found in areas up to 2,200 meters above sea level, and are the most widely spread in the Rhodope Mountains. They mainly consist of spruce, fir and white pine. Black fir grows in the Slavyanka and Pirin Mountains, and white fir grows in the Central Balkans, the West Rhodope, the Middle Pirin, Rila, and Vitosha.

There are 27,000 species of invertebrate fauna in Bulgaria, and more than 750 species of vertebrates. Of these, 397 are birds, 207 are fresh-water and Black Sea fish, 94 are mammals, and 52 are amphibians and reptiles.

Seven zoological regions are recognized throughout the country, four of which are in the Mediterranean climatic zone. Bulgaria is home to European, Euro-Siberian and Mediterranean flora and fauna, and the Mediterranean climate has strongly influenced the development of many species.

The cave fauna in Bulgaria consists of more than 100 species. The Black Sea fish populations attract both sport and industrial fishing.

Three national parks have been established in the country: Pirin National Park (a UNESCO natural heritage site), Rila National Park, and the Central Balkans National Park. There are also 11 nature reserves – Belasitsa, Balgarka, Vratsa Balkan, Golden Sands, Persina, Rila Monastery, Rusenski Lom, Sinite Kamani, Strandzha and the Shumen Plateau.

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