

= Shumen Plateau Nature Park =

The Shumen Plateau Nature Park (Bulgarian : ????????? ?????????????????) is located in the Shumen Plateau of the northern province of Shumen of Bulgaria , the highest plateau of the Danubian Plain . The Park encloses the Bukaka Reserve Forest , which is known for indigenous *Fagus sylvatica* *Fagus sylvatica* (common beech) *moesiaca* (the Balkan beech) forest . This Park was declared a National Park in 1980 and a Nature Park in 2003 to conserve its ecosystems and floral and faunal biodiversity , and to preserve its tableland landscape together with many tourist sites such as the Shumen fortress , the Founders of the Bulgarian State Monument , cave monasteries , and surface and underground karst caves . The park has the first thematic educational trail in the Karst Nature Park , constructed as part of a project titled " Natural Park of Shumen Plateau " with funds provided by the EU Cohesion Fund and the Republic of Bulgaria ; the trail is integral to the Operational Program " Environment 2007 ? 2013 " .

= = Geography = =

Located in Northeast Bulgaria , the park is part of the Shumen Plateau , which in turn is integral to the " Shumen Heights " to its east . The plateau is one of three zones of the Shumen Heights , the other two being the Balkan area in its central part and the Fiseka on its west . Together , the three zones are in the shape of an irregular rectangle oriented in northwest @-@ southeast direction . The river valleys in this area form the shape of segmented bays .

The entire plateau is delimited on the northern border by the Pakosha , Strazhka , and Chairdere river valleys ; by Pakosha and Vranato valleys on its west ; by the Vrana , Ticha , and Kamchia river valleys on the south ; and the lowlands of the Shumen @-@ Smyadovo border on the east , while the Fiseka mountain rises to a height of 500 @.@ 5 metres (1 @.@ 642 ft) in a north @-@ west direction . The plateau is 12 kilometres (7 @.@ 5 mi) long from west to east ; and 7 ? 8 kilometres (4 @.@ 3 ? 5 @.@ 0 mi) wide south to north , 7 ? 8 kilometres (4 @.@ 3 ? 5 @.@ 0 mi) wide in the far south ; 9 ? 10 kilometres (5 @.@ 6 ? 6 @.@ 2 mi) wide in the central part ; 11 ? 12 kilometres (6 @.@ 8 ? 7 @.@ 5 mi) wide towards the north and about 20 kilometres (12 mi) wide in the northern extremity . Width wise , the plateau is oriented in north @-@ south direction and extends 15 kilometres (9 @.@ 3 mi) and 17 kilometres (11 mi) respectively . The plateau covers a total area of 73 @.@ 13 square kilometres (28 @.@ 24 sq mi) .

The Shumen Plateau Nature Park encloses the Bukaka Reserve Forest , which covers a total forest area of 63 @.@ 04 hectares (155 @.@ 8 acres) . This forest is protected on account of its indigenous *Fagus sylvatica* (common beech) *moesiaca* (the Balkan beech) forest " that is several hundred years old . The only human activity allowed within this reserve is use of trails which pass through it . The Shumen Plateau occupies the highest plateau in the Danubian Plain , with an elevation of 502 metres (1 @.@ 647 ft) , and features " bizarre and fantastic rock phenomena and underground Karst forms " .

= = History = =

The Shumen Plateau is part of the Natura 2000 network and was designated per the Council Directive 92 / 43 / EEC for the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora . Within this plateau , the park is demarcated over an area of 3 @.@ 929 @.@ 9 hectares (9 @.@ 711 acres) . It lies in the eastern part of the Danubian Plain , near the town of Shumen , and was declared a National Park in 1980 and a Nature Park in 2003 . The responsibility of park 's management is with the government of Bulgaria and is dictated under the Management Plan for Nature Parks and the Protected Areas Act (1998) .

= = Biology = =

The park and the plateau have distinctive topographic features and plateau 's water resources ,

climate and soil conditions dictate the biodiversity of its plant species .

== Flora ==

The park has a dense forest area , with about 90 % area covered by forests mostly of the mixed deciduous forests . The plants and tree species reported from this forest , are : ash (*Fraxinus*) , beech (*Fagus*) , European hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) , lime (*Tilia*) , maple (*Acer campestre*) , Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*) , and many more . The forest 's conifer vegetation consists of : European black pine (*Pinus nigra*) , Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) , Oregon pine (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) , Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) , and spruce (*Picea*) . The shrub species reported are : dog rose (*Rosa canina*) , the European Cornel (*Cornus mas*) , the hawthorn (*Crataegus*) , and the hazel (*Corylus*) . The open area of the park is covered with several species of bush and grass . Other plant species reported are 14 types of orchid (*Orchidaceae*) and more than 250 species of herbal plants . The Management Plan for the park lists 550 species of vascular plants (excluding mosses) .

== Fauna ==

The faunal species reported consist of 350 invertebrates and more than 240 vertebrates . The mammals recorded are : badger (*Meles meles*) , beech marten (*Martes foina*) , fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) , red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) , roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) , wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) and so forth . There are also several species of avifauna . The reptile species reported include Aesculapian snake (*Elaphe longissima*) , European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*) , Hermann 's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) , horned viper (*Vipera ammodytes*) , spur @-@ thighed tortoise (*Testudo graeca*) , and wall lizard (*Podarcis muralis*) . Animals , which are under different protection categories , reported in the park are : black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) , Eurasian eagle @-@ owl (*Bubo bubo*) , lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarina*) , marbled polecat (*Vormela peregusna*) , Northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) , and Romanian hamster (*Mesocricetus newtoni*) .

== Cultural heritage ==

There are many cultural landmarks in the park . These are :

The Shumen fortress (on Bulgarian language : Shumenska krepost) , also known as the old town of Shumen , is an archaeological site . It was built over a hill which gives a commanding view of the Shumen city . The fortress is located within the park . The fortress formed the town of Shumen during the First and Second Bulgarian Empire (12th ? 14th centuries) . It was the best developed citadel during the 14th century . Thracians ruled over the territory from the 5th to 2nd century BC , followed by Romans who ruled from first century BC to 3rd century AD , and then by the early Byzantine from 4th to 6th century AD . The site consisted of refined residences , religious buildings , and defense fortifications . When the Ottomans took control of the fortress in 1444 , the then King W?adys?aw III of Poland (Varnenchik) (1440 ? 1444) of Polish @-@ Hungarian descent attempted an attack on the Ottomans which proved to be disastrous , as he was killed during the Battle of Varna . Following this battle the fortress was looted and gutted , and the Ottoman rulers eventually abandoned the fortress completely . It has since been partially restored .

The Founders of the Bulgarian State Monument or Creators of the Bulgarian State monument , is another notable monument within the park , built to commemorate the 1300th anniversary of the establishment of Bulgaria , starting from the First Bulgarian Empire (7th century ? 11th century) . This monument , which is about 3 kilometres (1 @.@ 9 mi) distance from the entrance of the Shumen fortress , was built in 1981 during the communist regime . An information center is situated 300 metres (980 ft) away from this monument and a 3 kilometres (1 @.@ 9 mi) track from here leads to the Shumen fortress .

There are cave monasteries which functioned during the Second Bulgarian Empire as religious and

cultural centres . They are located in karstic rock formations in the plateau and are difficult to access . Some of the notable caves are the Biserna Cave (Pearl Cave) and the Taynite Ponori Cave (the Secret Ponors Cave) .

Karstic limestone formations , which comprise the main geological formations of the park and the plateau , are found in the park in the form of ponors (sinkholes) in small canyons and rock rims .

= = = Trails = = =

The park has the first thematic educational trail in the Karst Nature Park , constructed as part of a project titled " Natural Park of Shumen Plateau " with funds provided by the EU Cohesion Fund and the Republic of Bulgaria , which is integral to the Operational Program " Environment 2007 ? 2013 " .