Abstract:

This article is aimed at determining the biggest importance of protected territories. It is especially important at the modern stage. Protected territories perform the large and useful work in using and protecting the natural resources of the country. The main task of the protected territories is preserving landscape etalons, also rare and valuable plants and animal species. The role of the protected territories as a scientific-researching object is vital. It is there, where the development of the natural processes is studied, the relationship between the separate elements of natural complex is revealed. The received material is broadly used in solving many scientific, techno-scientific and practical issues. So vital is the educational-cultural importance of the protected territories. Imereti – is one of the historical-geographical regions in western Georgia. Its area covers 6.552 km² Imereti, as well as Georgia, is distinguished with biovariety and unfortunately, problems of protecting wild nature is rather actual up to present time. The most efficient means of protecting wild nature is its territorial conservation – the development of the protected territories’ system. In order to protect the unique nature of Imereti, Sataplia State Nature Reserve and Ajameti Preserve have been created. Ajameti state reserve is located on the lowland of Colkhis, 1200 m. from sea level and is belonged to the regions of Zestaphoni and Baghdadi. The reserve was founded in 1946. From 1946 till 2008 it was Ajameti Nature Reserve. Then it was turned into preserve. Sataplia natural reserve was founded in 1935, in the vicinity of Kutaisi. There is distinguished the area of 345 hectares. According to the 1995 year’s decision of Georgian minsters’ cabinet, the first national park of Borjomi-Kharagauli was created in 2001. According to the data of 2011 year, 300 000 visitors were observed on the protected territories. Among them 152000 visitors were observed on the protected territory of Imereti.

Key terms: Protected Territories, Ajameti Natural Preserve, Sataplia Natural Reserve, Tskhaltubo’s cave.

Protected Territories of Imereti – One of the Regions of Georgia:

Imereti – is one of the historical-geographical regions in western Georgia. In broad sense it is the historical name of western Georgia, such as old Colkhis, Egrisi, and Abkhazia. Imereti itself is bordered by the mountain range of Likhi in the east, by the river Tskhenistskali in the west, by the Caucasus mountain range in the north, and by the mountains of Meskhethi or Persathi in the south. The name is connected to the location of this area, Imereti i.e. the other side of the Likhi mountain range.

Its area covers 6.552 km². Imereti, as well as Georgia, is distinguished with biovariety and unfortunately, problems of protecting wild nature is rather actual up to present time. The most efficient means of protecting wild nature is its territorial conservation – the development of the protected territories’ system.

Under the modern conditions, the improvement of protecting wild nature in Georgia is served by the law “ about protected territories’ systems”, which has been passed on the basis of the proposal of WWF Georgian office. Its main aim is to adapt international categories – state nature reserves, national park, natural monument and protected landscape and etc. in Georgia, elaborated by the world union of nature protection.

In order to protect the unique nature of Imereti, Sataplia State Nature Reserve and Ajameti Preserve have been created.

Ajameti state reserve is located on the lowland of Colkhis, 1200 m. from sea level and is belonged to the regions of Zestaphoni and Baghdadi. The reserve was founded in 1946. From 1946 till 2008 it was Ajameti Nature Reserve. Then it was turned into preserve.

The territory of Ajameti preserve is an old terrace of the river Rioni, on which oak relict forests typical of Colkhis are preserved. The forest consists of Imereti Oak, Zelcova, Hartvisi Oak, Chestnut tree, Hornbeam, Oriental Hornbeam, Field Maple and etc.
Subforest consists of Hawthorn, Sweetbrier, Laurocerasus, Rhamnus Koene, Rhododendron flavum Don (=Azalea pontica L.). A wood of pure Caucasian Zelcova is preserved on the left bank of the river Khanistskali covering the area of 1.5 square hectares. Ajameti Reserve’s Mukhrani reached Tsinaveli, Apkhanouri and village Vartsikhe 60-80 years ago. Due to the irregular cutting these areas have been changed by vineyard or agricultural cultures. Because of this, instead of the broad wood areas, only the fragments of Ajameti and Vartsikhe’s Mukhrani have been preserved. Nowadays, the earlier natural view of Ajameti Forest is significantly changed towards worsening, that is caused by intensive cutting of oak.

Despite this, Ajameti Reserve is the unique monument of Georgian diverse nature.

Sataplia natural reserve was founded in 1935, in the vicinity of Kutaisi. There is distinguished the area of 345 hectares. Sataplia is especially famous for the fact, that here is the footprint of extinct animals – dinosaurs. From the specialists’ view, Sataplia is one of the richest natural monument in the world, which was first discovered by the famous student of local lore Peter Chabukiani. He was first who considered the trace as the footprint of predator and grass eater dinosaurs from the Mesozoic era. That proves the fact that in western Georgia several generations of dinosaurs inhabited 120 million years ago. Chabukiani discovered a karstic cave near the dinosaur’s footprints, decorated with transparent stalactites and stalagmites. The cave spreads from the North towards the South. It has branching here and there and the overall length of branching exceeds 600 meters.

Alongside the establishment for stable developing principles, the necessity of more flexible, new system of protected territories has been revealed. It should also be closely connected to the social-economic development of regions.

According to the 1995 year’s decision of Georgian minsters’ cabinet, the first national park of Borjomi-Kharagauli was created in 2001. It is located in the central part of Georgia. It is the first national park of Georgia. It was created with the help of the world fund of nature protection and German government and it was officially opened in 2001. The national park of Borjomi-Kharagauli covers more than 76 000 hectares. From this, 24 000 hectare is in Imereti and is richest for its flora and fauna. The most part of forests are preserved here in the original form. According to the width of area, the park is one of the richest in Europe. The aim of the national park protection is to create relaxation and recreation zone and preserve wild nature for the future generation.

Imereti is one of the richest regions for the spreading of karstic forms. Tskhaltubo’s cave should be noted (near the village Kumistavi), the total length of which is more than 15 km. The number of halls in this cave is more than two dozen. The halls are rich with the various stalactic forms. Tsutsxvati (Tkibuli region) multi-storeyed cave has a huge scientific value. Archaeological monuments of middle Paleolithic (Mousterian epoch), Bronze era and historical epoch and animal bones of about forty species have been found in several caves. Plenty of remainders from middle and late Mousterian epoch are included in the Jruchuli cave (region of Chiatura). Among fully equipped caves in Imereti is Sataplia (mentioned above by us) in the region of Tskhaltubo, and Navenakhevi in the region of Therjola. “Thethra” is adopted from the medical viewpoint (in the region of Tskhaltubo).

It is also important to note several erosion witness cliffs and columns in Imereti. Among them is noteworthy the column of Katskhi. It has been worked out in limestone and is of 40 m. in height. There are two small churches on the top of the rock column, also a hermit monk’s cell and pitchers hidden in the underground. Sairme erosion witness is also impressive, and it is located on the left bank of the river Tsablaristskali (Baghdadi region) on the very side of the road. The height of the erosion witness is 20 meters.
Among canyons, Okatse canyon is noteworthy (region of Khoni). Its depth reaches 50 meters, at some places the edges of the canyon almost join each other.

In the upper part of the river Khvirala, in the areas of Chiathura, there is produced a deep canyon, and there also is a natural bridge on the river Sam (region of Tskhaltubo). It has been built by cretaceous breccias of limestone. The length of the bridge is 3.5 m. and the height from the river level is 2 m.

Vocluses (spring with large debets) are spread in the limestone line of Imereti. Among them should be noted Tkhibula (region of Therjola) – Dzevrula, Shabathaghele-Chishura riverbeds’ endings and etc. Especially remarkable is Tskhrapiraghele near Kvtsire (region of Chiathura). Karstic underground rivers flow in the tunnels of Sathaplia, Kumisthavi, Kvlishori (region of Tskaluto) caves.

According to the ministry of environmental protection, the number of visitors on the protected territories has increased up to 100 percent.

According to the data of 2011 year, 300 000 visitors were observed on the protected territories. Among them are 53 000 citizens of foreign countries such as Israel, Germany, Poland and etc. As for the number of local visitors, their amount reaches 247 000 according to statistics.

The ministry of environmental protection connects the increased number of visitors to the development of international infrastructure in national parks and creating a new tourist service by the protected territories’ agency in 2011.

In Georgia, Sataplia complex, the visitors’ centre of Borjomi-Kharagauli, speleo-paleontological tours on the protected territories of Imereti, the ability of mountaineering bike riding and etc. are considered as the attractive places and services for tourists.

Most of the tourists, 152 000 visitors were observed on the protected territory of Imereti.

References:
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