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Sustainable Landscapes and Economy

On the inestimable natural and human value of the landscape

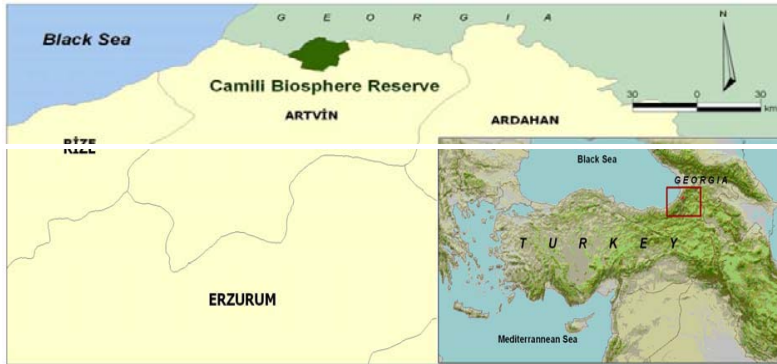
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Introduction

Camili Basin is located within the municipal borders of Borçka District in the Province of Artvin and it contains six villages. The total population is approximately 1200 people. In summer season, this figure is increased by people who are originally from the basin but live in Borçka district and in other cities of the country.



Due to its biodiversity, natural resources and cultural and historical values, the Camili basin was included to the World Biosphere Reserves Network by UNESCO in 2005.

Projects Developed in the Region

The importance of the area in terms of nature conservation began during the 1990s. The Camili Region is located in the Karçal Mountains where it was the pilot site of the project “ Old Growth Forests of the Black-sea Region”, implemented by the Society for the Protection of Nature between 1993-1996.

With their old growth forests and landscape characteristics, Efeler and Gorgit areas were declared as Nature Conservation Areas pursuant to the Law on National Park, Number 2873, by the Ministry of Forestry in 1998.



Due to its natural resources and rich biodiversity, the Camili basin was selected one of the four pilot sites of the project called “Biodiversity and Natural Resources Management Project” which was implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry in collaboration with the World Bank. An entrance building with a visitor center and a bird watching tower were constructed. Local people had been supported through the small grant programs so that the grant projects were prepared by the local people to establish alternative income generation activities. By this way, totally 47



projects, including ecotourism (pension running etc.), education and awareness, Caucasian bee and organic honey production, traditional hand made products, nature friendly animal husbandry practices, activities and agriculture applications supporting biodiversity were financially and technically supported.

The production of genetically pure Caucasian bee race and organic honey takes an important place in the local economy. 30 % of the total population of the Camili basin occupy with beekeeping activities. Therefore, beekeeping is one of the major economic activities in the basin. With the lead of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO and the support of Ministries, of Forestry and Water Affairs and of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, in order to document and



certificate that the honey produced in Camili basin is harmonised with ecological rules and an organic products, a project entitled “Camili Biosphere Reserve Local Products Certification Project” was implemented in 2010.

A documentary film for the Camili Biosphere Reserve was prepared by a national documentary TV channel (İZ TV) with the support of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO in 2013. With this documentary, natural resources, biodiversity, especially traditional uses and cultural lifestyle of the Camili basin and the local people are presented to national public.

In order to increase awareness and education of the school children on protected areas and biosphere reserves, a poster named “Protected areas and Biosphere Reserves” was prepared and distributed to the schools throughout the country in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

In 2014, a book entitled “Biosphere Reserves in Education for Sustainable Development: Life in Camili “Bread, Yogurt and Honey” was prepared through a project supported by the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO and was distributed to all related stakeholders in the country. In this book, the question of how the sustainable development has been succeeded and what is the role of the Biosphere Reserve concept in this process are being voiced by the local people living in the basin.



Natural and Cultural Values

Biological Diversity

Camili Biosphere Reserve contains a wide variety of species and natural ecosystems linked across a considerable range of altitudes (350m - 3500m). The particular values for conservation objectives are old growth forests and temperate rain mixed forests like Caucasian spruce (*Picea orientalis*), Oriental beech (*Fagus orientalis*), Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), and Caucasian lime (*Tilia rubra* ssp. *caucasica*), alpine and subalpine ecosystems and aquatic communities. There are 990 flora species of which 23 are endemic. Camili Biosphere Reserve hosts a near intact diversity of fauna typical for the area. The particular values as conservation priorities are genetically pure Caucasian Honey Bee Race, Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*), Chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), Caucasian Black Grouse (*Tetrao mlokosiewiczii*), Caucasian Viper (*Vipera kaznakovi*), Caucasian Salamander (*Mertensiella caucasica*), Big Spotted Trout (*Salmo trutta macrostigma*) and migratory raptors.



Historical and Cultural Values

The Camili area has been governed at various times by the Byzantine Empire, the Seljuk Empire, Mongols, the Ottoman Empire, Russians and Georgians. Notable archaeological and historical features in the Camili basin include the Kemer Bridge at the entrance of Efele village, the Iremite mosque in Maral village, the church in Uğur village, Tamara’s bridge and two old prisons. Due to their isolation, the

villagers have retained many old traditions, reflected in their livelihoods, in the design of houses and farmsteads, in the tools and materials they make and use. Traditional dances and old folk music culture still survived in the area; the villagers have recently formed a Polyphonic Elders' Chorus with a view to preserve traditional songs for future generations.

Nature Friendly Business Practices

Ecotourism and In House Hospitality (Bed& Breakfast)

In 2000, while the number of tourists who visit the region was nearly zero, this figure has increased to one thousand after declaration of the area as biosphere reserve by UNESCO in 2005. After the support of small grant programs within the context of the project entitled "Biodiversity and Natural Resources Management Project" executed by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry in collaboration with the World Bank and with the support of Global Environment Facility (GEF), the number of family pensions increased to twelve and the number of visitors in the basin increased to 2.200 by 2006, 6.500 visitors in 2011 and approximately 30.000 visitors in 2013. Currently, the number of pensions is about 25, daily overnight accommodation capacity in the basin is average 450 persons. The family pensions consists of traditional wooden houses with local architecture. Houses are turned into family pensions with little modifications in order to protect local architecture. Pensions provide clean and natural accommodation facilities with warm and welcoming family environment for the guests. Local people are aware of the nature and its protection. Pensions provide locally produced food with a large menu for their guests. Most of local foods are produced by themselves or bought from their neighbors creating an economic circle that provides mutual benefits for all involved. Traditional wooden houses are prepared for accommodation of visitors. According a survey carried out in the Camili basin shows that 99% of the visitors prefer to stay in traditional wooden houses. They explain reasons for that as warm and always welcoming family environment, experiencing traditional lifestyle and culture, cleanness and hygiene and locally produced food as well. Total population of the Camili basin is around 1.200 people and there are six villages and approximately 270 households. The services like pension operating and other activities connected to them provide average annual 500.000 US Dollars for the basin.



Beekeeping

Beekeeping has been a part of the economy for hundreds of years in the Camili region. However, prior to the research and development projects implemented by TEMA (Turkish Foundation for Combating of Erosion and Reforestation), beekeeping was carried out by traditional methods and only for honey production. Through the projects, specialists determined that the bees in the basin belong to the highly productive Caucasian bee race which is one of three of the most important bee races in the world. Besides, the researches showed that the genetic structure of the bees has not changed since no migrant beekeepers enter the basin. As the Caucasian bee species lives only in the Camili basin of the country and it is genetically pure, they are also very important for the regional biodiversity. Due to this characteristics of the basin, special attention was given to this issue in the Biodiversity and Natural Resources Management Project and a “Beekeeping Committee” was established under the Environmental Protection and Development Association with representatives from each village and unifying the producers in the region. In 2010, the honey in the basin was certificated as “Organic Product”. In recent years, beekeeping has become a major source for revenue and employment in the basin and it is moving towards a well known and the best quality trade mark in the sector. Moreover, the name and logo of the Camili Biosphere Reserve was registered by the Turkish Patent Institute of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry and the Ministry handed over the right of use of the patent to the local producers. Currently, approximate 200 households occupy with beekeeping and 30 tons of honey is produced per year. Annual average income for the region is about 1.500.000 US Dollars. Furthermore, 5.000 Caucasus queen bees are produced and supplied to the markets and annually 175.000 US Dollars are generated for income in the basin.



Agriculture and Animal Husbandry

Nearly each one of the families has a farm to supply their needs and particularly they produce beans, cabbage and vegetables. Hazelnuts take an important place among the Camili’s agricultural products. Hazelnuts of the Camili basin are specially sought and demanded by the markets for its quality and taste. No chemical pesticides are used for nursing of hazelnuts in the region. Therefore, the hazelnut of Camili is considered as an organic product. A total of approximately 400 tons of hazelnuts is produced per year in the basin and average 1.250.000 US Dolars, which are very important incomes for the people of basin, are generated per year. Animal husbandry and livestock in the region is not high. Most of the families keep animals (cows, sheep and goats) for their own needs and to supply products for the pensions.

As the results of the above mentioned activities, average 3.500.000 US Dollars revenues are generated annually in the basin. When considering approximate 270 households settle in the basin, the annual income per household is about 13.000 US Dollars.



Conclusion

Establishment of the right balance between conservation and development requests on the one hand, enhancing of the sustainable livelihood facilities for local people on the other hand, supporting of them for getting the standards of desired development. The main themes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) which was held in 2012 were “ Green Economy ” and “Sustainable Development” and the final report of the conference states that livelihoods of the people lived especially in rural areas must be enhanced and biodiversity should be protected. This statement has much increased the significance of biosphere reserve concepts nowadays. As it is known the biosphere reserves are the areas where the priority attention is given to human factor as well as to nature conservation issue together. As defined in the Seville Strategy that is the legal basis of biosphere reserves and prepared in Seville City of Spain in 1995, the biosphere reserves are the fields where sustainable economic and human development are promoted, on the other hand species, genetic resources and ecosystems are protected. According to the Seville Strategy, resources in these fields may be managed by local communities, institutions, NGOs, economic groups and other related stakeholders in a sustainable way.

The biosphere reserves are nature conservation areas where a great emphasis is given to the development of local people providing a sustainable way so that it creates opportunities for green economy practices which do not damage natural resources and biodiversity. Therefore, in order to realise the goals like protection of biodiversity and providing economic development for people in a balanced way, to increase the numbers of biosphere reserves in the country and in the world will make a positive contribution in terms of achieving the target.

Camili Biosphere Reserve with its landscape values, biodiversity, natural resources and local traditional culture, is one of the unique places in the country and in the world. The traditional lifestyle and uses from past to present and kept alive in present, are being maintained through the integrating of modern systems. It is resulted from capability and skills of the community of the Camili basin through the keeping up with the today’s conditions by respecting to their past. Together with its difficult field conditions the people in the basin is aware of the significance of nature and its impacts to their life.

Photos:

E. Ertürk, f. Gümüřtekin, g. Tuncer, M.H. Baykal, Ö. Alaçam, S. Eraydin, V. Atasoy, Y. Lise,

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