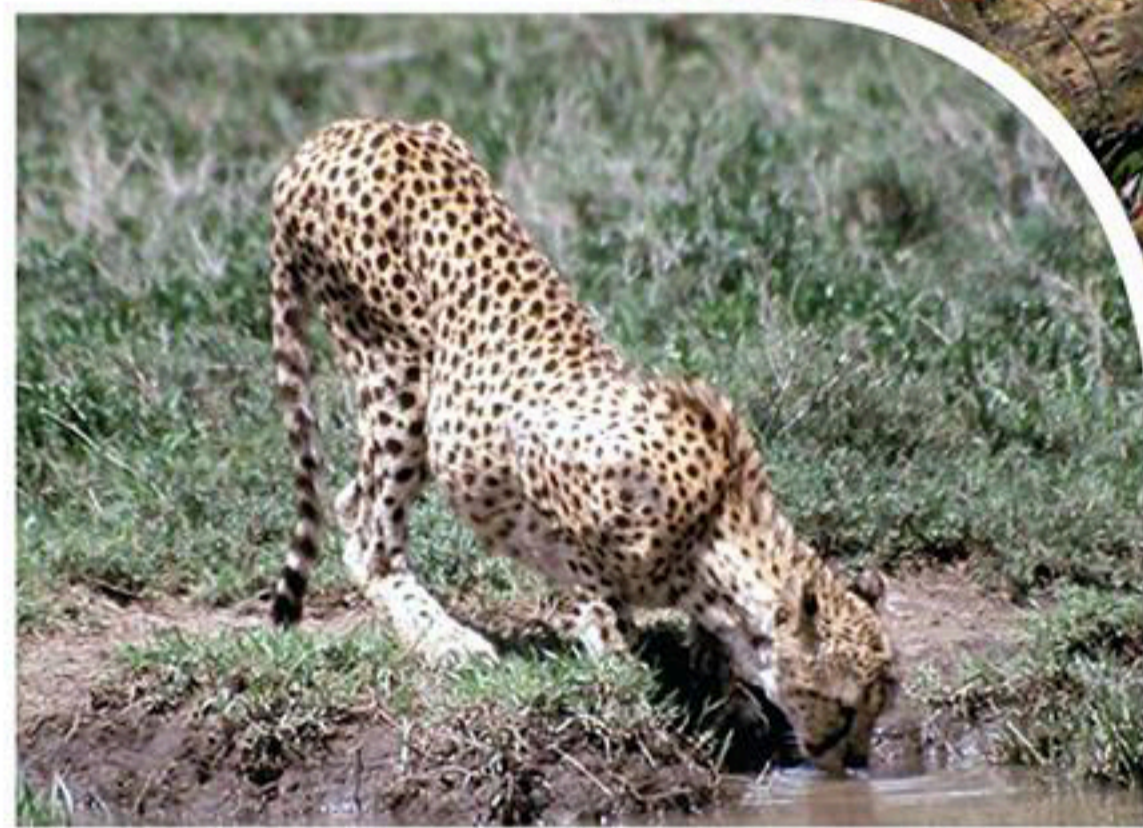
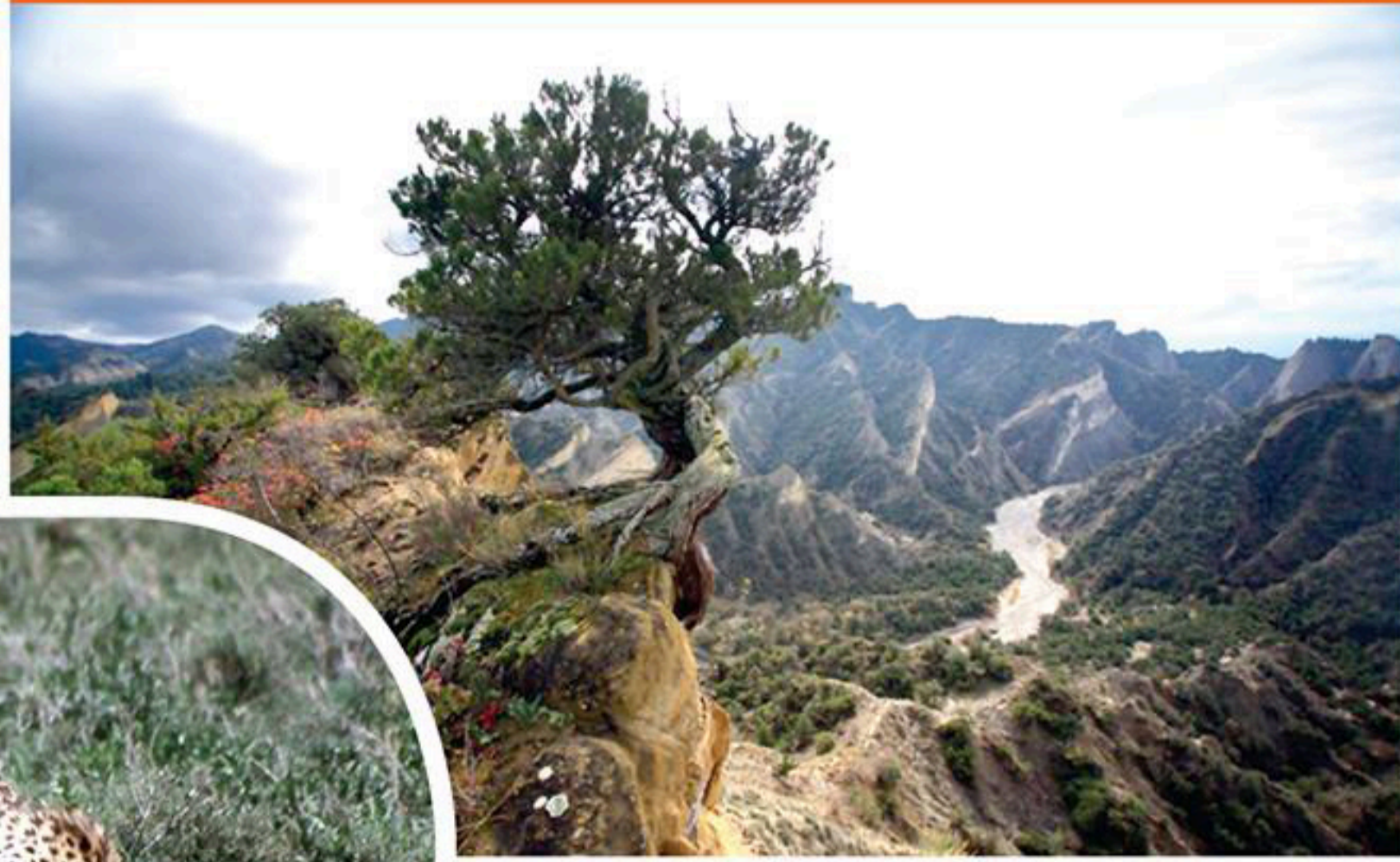


BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

**V**ashlovani Protected Area, affectionately called "Georgian Safari", is one of the most beautiful places you might hope to see in Georgia. Breathtaking landscapes and abundance of wild animals make Vashlovani a "must visit" site for tourists. This year, this beautiful place also caught the eye of the international community: The Council of Europe granted it a prestigious award - the European Diploma for Protected Areas.

In its latest meeting, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (key decision-making body of the Council of Europe

## GEORGIA'S VASHLOVANI PROTECTED



that brings together representatives of all 47 states) has solemnly awarded the European Diploma for Protected Areas to the Vashlovani Protected Areas in Georgia. This protected zone includes five areas: the Vashlovani Strict Nature Reserve, the Vashlovani National Park, the Alazani Riparian Forest Natural Monument, the Takhti-Tepa Natural Monument and the Eagle Canyon Natural Monument.

In its resolution adopted on the 3rd of June, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe recognised the European significance of these areas and their features: remarkable landscapes, exceptional geological features, rich and diverse flora and fauna (including rare species), and ecosystems of particular importance for European biodiversity.

The Committee of Ministers placed these

## AREA RECEIVES EUROPEAN RECOGNITION




areas under the patronage of the Council of Europe until June 3 of 2020 and attached two conditions to the award:

1. By the end of 2015, remove the shelters located on the immediate border of the Vashlovani Strict Nature Reserve, and rigorously enforce the existing regulation for grazing in the reserve;
2. Accelerate the drafting process of a comprehensive sustainable grazing management

plan, taking into account the socio-economic context and the effects of grazing, positive and negative, on the long-term conservation of the features of the Vashlovani Protected Areas.

The Committee of Ministers also urged Georgia to enforce the existing regulation on grazing in the whole Diploma area, without delay, and to limit grazing activities to the carrying capacity for the Vashlovani Protected Areas.

Georgian Journal was privileged to ask **Mr. Eladio Fernandez Galiano**, Head of the Democratic Initiatives Department and supervisor for the European Diploma for Protected Areas, for his insight on the subject: "The European Diploma is not just a recognition of the exceptional value, it is also a recognition of exemplary management. We are indeed very happy that Georgia was honored with this distinction. Unfortunately for Georgia, awarding the diploma doesn't yield immediate financial benefits for the recipient, i.e. we don't give any money, but it is a major prestige boost that will elevate the status of the site from touristic, environmental and cultural perspectives. However, with this honor come responsibilities: to improve this area, to make it better for the future."




The European Diploma for Protected Areas is a prestigious international award granted since 1965 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. It recognises natural and semi-natural areas and landscapes of exceptional European importance for the preservation of biological, geological and landscape diversity and which are managed in an exemplary way.

Protected areas may receive the diploma for their outstanding scientific, cultural or aesthetic qualities, but they must also be subjects of suitable conservation schemes. Since its creation in 1965, 73 protected areas have been granted the European Diploma. They are located in 28 European countries, both member and non-member states of the Council of Europe.

## SUNDAY BRUNCH!

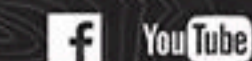
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