

EUROPEAN DIPLOMA HOLDING SITE

**IPLYTARNOC FOSSILS
NATURE CONSERVATION AREA**

HUNGARY

ANNUAL REPORT

2013

**FOR THE PERIOD
NOVEMBER 1. 2012 - OKTOBER 31. 2013**



Status:

Country : H U N G A R Y

Name of the area awarded the Diploma : Ipolytarnoc Fossils Nature Conservation Area

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Person responsible: Imre Szarvas

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Central authority concerned :

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Authority responsible for its management:

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Natural heritage general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation

The Ipolytarnoc Fossils Nature Conservation Area is situated in Northern Hungary. It protects a globally unique heritage of the Earth's history. As a kind of Prehistoric Pompeii, it represents an exceptionally well preserved palaeohabitat due to a sheltering volcanic catastrophe that happened 20 million years ago.

1.1. Environment

No significant changes have occurred since 2012.

1.2. Flora and vegetation :

Natural succession has been taking place in some of the forest-meadow edges on the eastern area. Forestry activity controls the spread of exotic acacia and meadow maintenance suppresses invasive plants.

1.3. Fauna:

The area is a wildlife refuge belonging to the ecological corridor of the state border's green belt, biodiversity is richer than in the neighbourhood.

2. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

2.1. Cultural heritage :

Only the intangible cultural assets are worth mentioning within the confines of the area, concerning the 2 century-long history of scientific research. There are panels commemorating famous scientists' contributions to the knowledge of the site.

2.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage:

None.

2.2 Socio-economic context:

The tourism of the site provides more and more seasonal jobs for the locally unemployed, and local enterprises profit from the tourism of the site.

2.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

The Site as a geotourism centre has provided, with extensions, a year-long seasonal work opportunity for the locally unemployed of the nearby 4 settlements. (The BNPD was very active employing altogether 40 people this year.) Besides, 7/3 people-large staffs used to run the visitor centre/restaurant contracted and managed by enterprises, till the end of October 31, when their contracts expired. Altogether the site has been the largest employer within a 10 km-large radius.

3. Education and scientific interest

3.1.Visitors - Information policy

3.1.1Arrangements for receiving and informing the public:

The tourism developments of the “Prehistoric Pompeii” between 2005-2010 proved to be successful, the new facilities and educational programs function well. The site's home page is constantly updated, and it is an effective on-line tool to inform the public about changes and developments. Ipolytarnoc is the main gateway to the Novohrad-Nógrád Geopark, it provides information about the region as well. Visitor outreach is multifaceted, including presentations on different travel and educational expos all around the country. As a new marketing tool, a Miocene Park profile is promoted.

3.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behaviour:

Although the number of visitors coming to the site has been declining since 2010, still it reached around 50 thousand people, despite the economic downturn. Vandalism exists, but on minor level, littering is not insignificant.

3.1.3.Special visits:

Students of European Geoparks visited the Fossils as part of a Comenius project.

3.2.Scientific research:

3.2.1.Current or completed research:

The fossiliferous localities have been constantly monitored, a low-scale new excavation started in summer concerning fossil trackways. The fossils are stored in the fossil-depository wing of the research house. Studies on the volcanism, which destroyed the habitat is an ongoing scientific work involving Hungarian and Slovak experts alike.

3.2.2. Scientific publications:

Scientific papers are put on the home page, to make them accessible to the interested. The site's resources and assets provide diverse topics to several university theses each year.

4. Site description

4.1. Changes in legislation or regulations:

No changes.

4.2.Changes in ownership title:

The site is state property managed by the BNDI, no changes are expected.

4.3. Extensions or transfer, new uses:

No other significant changes have occurred since last year.

5.Site management

5.1.Improvements made

Since 2005 the site's basic touristic facilities have been enhanced and now represent world-class level. The semi-natural environment also benefits from this development.

5.1.1.Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna:

On a 6 hectare-large forest section acacia was replaced by native tree saplings, on another forest parts the thinning of acacia goes on according to the forest cultivation plan. Being connected to the green belt of the state border the site functions as a kind of refuge for the animals, where focusing on nature protection, regulated game hunting is authorised. To control the wild boar and deer population, hunting by the game-keeper of the BNPD is in practice. The old inner fence system was terminated to enhance migratory paths.

5.1.2.Protection against the elements :

The forest edges as fire zones around the exhibition buildings of the geological path are constantly cleared. The maintained wetland habitats function as temporary water reservoirs for flood preventions to the nearby village.

5.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares :

The study trail system is constantly maintained. Illegal trespassers stole firewood from the site, some connected dirt roads got blocked in order to stop intruding traffic with unauthorised vehicles.

5.1.4. Field equipment:

No change since last year.

5.1.5. Waste management:

Selective garbage collection is taking place with designated containers, although the visitors not always keep the rules. Organic matter is composted. The abolished old fence wire was taken to metal collectors to be recycled.

5.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems:

The usage of alternative energy for the new buildings was priority during the developments, partly to achieve low operating costs and partly because of the site's mission in the spreading of environmental-awareness. New plans were drafted for solar cells to position on top of buildings to gain electricity. Firewood of the felled acacia is used in tile stoves.

5.2.Management:

5.2.1. Administrative department:

The site has 3 permanent staff members running the site. They supervise the contracted partners and seasonal workers as well, beside the daily management.

5.2.1. Wardens' department:

The site has 2 rangers amongst the staff, whose patrol area is limited around the site.

5.2.3. Internal policing measures:

No changes.

5.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action:

Illegal tree cutting and firewood theft happened on the forest part edge of the site, local criminals were identified, police and judicial procedures started against them in late fall.

II. INFLUENCE OF THE AWARD OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

The public and media are using the title of the Diploma as part of the image of the site. The award and the recommendations of the European Council give additional support for the implementation of the area's management plan. Altogether the Diploma label has been used in good effects, it contributes to the success, when the BNPI applies for funds to accomplish new developments.

III.CONDITIONS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AWARD OR RENEWAL

The Resolution CM/ResDip(2010)15 on the renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas awarded to the Ipolytarnóc Protected Area (Hungary) (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 16 September 2010 at the 1091st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies) renewed the Diploma to Ipolytarnoc Fossils until 11 September 2020 and attached the following 5 recommendations to the renewal:

1. *Recognising the site's high potential for further discoveries of geological interest, research – especially the palaeontological excavations – should continue; all appropriate measures should be taken to preserve and, if possible, exhibit the natural resources; the results of scientific research should be made publicly available;*

Action taken by the site to comply with the recommendation:

A new area with fossil footprints is under excavation along the geological study path. The site provides high-tech interpretation techniques of the prehistoric habitat, gained scientific knowledge is on display and new papers have been made accessible and downloadable on the site's website.

2. *The site should take an active role in the management of the Slovak-Hungarian transborder Novohrad-Nógrád Geopark, in order to preserve and interpret the natural assets of the region and to become a focal, multilingual information point for geotourism;*

Action taken by the site to comply with the recommendation:

The trans-boundary Novohrad-Nograd Geopark with the essential endorsement of the BNPD, became member of the European and Global Geoparks Networks in 2010. Since the scientific centre of the geopark is at Ipolytarnoc, it is a driving force in order to preserve the geological heritage of the whole geopark and advocate its resources to the visitors. During the special Geopark Week (the turn of May) diverse programs, like the very successful and traditional volcano day served this purpose this year.

3. *The entrance to the protected area should have an appropriate gateway displaying information in order to control tourism within the site and the buffer zone; the buildings along the geological trail should be further integrated into the landscape; the power line that runs between the village and the visitor centre should be replaced with an underground cable;*

Action taken by the site to comply with the new recommendation:

In front of the new entrance gate a new panel was emplaced, QR code and old Hungarian script alphabet are used beside Hungarian, Slovak and English languages to inform visitors about the site. Due to fire-protection restrictions vegetation cover of buildings can not be adopted. the newer buildings are more organically blend into the landscape. No new developments with the power line's replacement, although a draft plan focuses on the laying of underground cable.

4. *The gradual replacement of the exotic trees with indigenous species should be continued by assisting the natural succession process through ecologically sensitive land management practices; the control of game – causing considerable damage to vegetation and protected animal species – should be continued;*

Action taken by the site to comply with the recommendation:

A larger scale forestry activity continued this year covering some 10 hectares. The former acacia forest section's transformation by indigenous tree samplings is going well. Game management is an ongoing activity throughout the year, since the whole area is a specially designated hunting area managed by the BNPD.

5. *The balance between open spaces and wooded areas on the western side of the conservation area, close to the nearby settlement, should be maintained to preserve the mosaic structure of the landscapes there;*

Action taken by the site to comply with the recommendation:

Effective animal husbandry, racka sheep grazing and hay cutting activities manage the mosaic-like structure of open spaces with forested areas in the border zone, where tree thinning on forest edges also maintains the mixed vegetation cover of the landscape.

*For new and detailed developments, please check on the Ipolytarnóc Fossils website.
(<http://osmaradvanyok.hu>)*



Local Products Fair

Local craftsman and agricultural producers could sell their produce by the visitor centre on occasions like seasonal fairs organised by the Site.



In Situ Track Presentation

Prof. L. Kordos interprets the footprinted sandstone features to the European Geoparks' students. *The new excavated area is promising, beardog footprints have been identified.*



Concert of the Forest

As a new initiative, different bands and orchestras celebrated the Nature by music in the Miocene Park on July 1, this year. Families could enjoy this free event.