



Rusenski Lom Natural Park is one of eleven natural parks around Bulgaria. It is situated along the canyon like valley of the Rusenski Lom River - the last right feeder of the Danube. The Park has been announced protected area in 1970 and embraces a territory of 3408 hectares. The Park is recognized as an interesting and precious site of high aesthetic value preserving beautiful riverside terraces, meanders, high vertical rocks, areas of rich variety of species, caves, rock formations, historical monuments of national and international significance. A unique and picturesque corner of motherland nature is situated in the Eastern part of the Danube hilly plain, about 20 km to the south of the town of Ruse - the Natural Park of Rusenski Lom. The Park bears the name of the river Rusenski Lom - the last right feeder of the Danube River. It has been announced park by Order No 567 as of 26th of February, 1970 r., Official gazette issue No 30/14.04.1970, with a territory of 22267 decares, embracing the river valleys of Mali, Cherni and Beli Lom, with total length of 42 km. The Order describes the boundaries and the regime of maintenance of the protected area as well as number of restrictions on the activities, completed on the territory of the Park.

The valley of the Rusenski Lom River presents an isolated oasis with a unique mixture of species of various zoologic and phyto-geographical origin – Middle European, Steppe and sub-Mediterranean. These are favoured by the diverse relief, the specific micro climate as well as the availability of rock formations and wet lands.

Here the limestone predominates. It is well known that the biodiversity of karst terrains is two or three times richer in comparison with other types of landscapes. There are hundreds of smaller caves in the valley that have no sleeves.

Forest-bushy and grass formations can be seen along the steep slopes above the river - this is the so called "dark forest", comprising mainly oak trees, elm-trees, maple, ash-trees, lime trees, rich variety of bushes – hawthorn, dog rose, lilac and variety of grass plantations.

The pride of the park is the number of rare and protected plant species, out of which one Bulgarian and five Balkan endemic plants - among these is the *Chamaecytisus kovacevii*, *Verbascum dieckianum*, the latter only deposit to be found in the Polomieto area. An interesting representative of the steppe plants is one kind of stipa, which can be found in the park.

The fauna here is even more diverse. Amongst the invertebrates, the Carpathian scorpio is of interest as well as the scolopendra. There are also 10 species of aphibians (5 of them are protected species) and 19 species of reptiles that inhabit the valley. Of special

zoo-geographical value is the *Cyrtodactylus kotschyi*. One can also find here two types of terrestrial tortoises, blotched snake, Melanistic Aesculapian Snake, *Coronella austriaca*, horned viper.

The river is home for 22 species of fish, crayfish, snails and river shells. Sports fishing is not banned. The park is real paradise for birds. One can see here a lot of birds that are endangered throughout Europe - this is the reason for Lomovete being announced ornithologically significant site.