

Environment

Protection of natural environment

Podlaskie Voivodeship covers an area of more than 20.000 square kilometres, which makes 6,5 per cent of whole Poland.

Against a background of the country, Podlaskie Voivodeship distinguishes itself by unusual natural values. Considerable area of green grounds – 19,8 per cent, waste lands (especially swamps) – 3,0 per cent and water – 3,0 per cent, as well as a high level of forestage (29,2 per cent according to The Regional Directorate of the State Forests) are the best proofs. More than 50 per cent of the whole voivodeship area is unchanged by men activity. Great forest groups like Białowieża, Knyszyn or Augustów Primeval Forests, the Narew river valley – swamps with large river-bed system, vivid and priceless the Bug river valley, the Biebrza Swamps – the most natural in whole Middle Europe, a great postglacial landscape of the Northern Suwałki Region – all this remained untouched by a man.

Ranges of many Northern as well as Middle and West-European species of birds run through the voivodeship. There are more than 1000 species of vascular plants (including 26 species of trees, 55 species of shrubs, 14 species of brush-woods and 37 species of the phylum Pteridophyte), 300 species of the phylum Bryophyte and liverworts, more than 350 species of lichens and over 3000 species of fungus on the territory of the voivodeship. A group of 20 species of pine-trees and spruces is also worth of notice.

The area is rich with animals as well. There are over 60 species of mammals, more than 260 species of birds, 7 species of reptiles, 12 species of amphibians, 27 species of fish and over 9000 species of insects.

European bison is a special species, which lives in natural forest environment in two populations: in Knyszyn Primeval Forest (15 heads) and in Białowieża Primeval Forest (about 300 heads).

Beaver – the most important representative of rodents is also worth of particular notice. There are over 10.000 beavers on the territory of the voivodeship.

Very rare species of birds and these which has been declared endangered on European scale exist in this area (e.g. heath-cock, black-cock, osprey, vacuole). Population of white storks is exceptionally large. There are more than 6.000 storks' couples in the voivodeship.

Almost 32 per cent of Podlaskie Voivodeship area is protected in many different forms and that puts our region in a strict internal fore-front. There are:

- 4 national parks: Białowieża, Biebrza, Narew and Wigry of total area of 92031 hectares,

- 3 landscape parks: Łomża Landscape Park of the Narew river Valley, Landscape Park of Knyszyn Primeval Forest and Suwałki Landscape Park of total area of 88084,5 hectares,
- 85 natural sanctuaries of total area of 14015 hectares,
- 15 regions of protected scenery of total area of 471761 hectares,
- 249 ecological grounds of total area of 3085 hectares,
- natural and landscape complex of total area of 60 hectares,
- 2 evidence positions of total area of 0,6 hectares,
- 2038 natural monuments.

