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Polska Skakavitsa Waterfall

Polska Skakavitsa Waterfall Natural Landmark

Kraishteto is one of Bulgaria's geographic areas having the most complex geomorphologic structure. Millions of years ago from the magma in the depths of the core of Earth, the volcanic lava and the bottoms of the big water basins, the rocks we see when we look around have formed. These rocks can be seen along the way to Vodopada Neighbourhood of Polska Skakavitsa Village.

Garbinksi thrust is one of the phenomena that are part of Bulgaria's geological heritage. The formation of the waterfall at Polska Skakavitsa Village is also the result of a past geological event, having catastrophic consequences perhaps. Approximately 120 million years ago various deformations of the crust of the Earth have appeared as a result of serious processes of force and their activity. One such deformation is the visible cutting line that led to the formation of Skakavitsa Waterfall.

Golemi (Shiroki) Dol and Brisnitsa (Zlogoshka) Rivers are the two relatively small right-side tributaries of Struma River, passing through the area of Polska Skakavitsa Village. Skakavitsa Waterfall exists on the first of the two tributaries – Shiroki Dol. The displacement between the highest point, where the waterfall starts, to the level of Struma River is 70 m. The main fall of the water is 53 m high. Unlike some waterfalls that are higher than it, is active

throughout the year. It is deepest in spring and lowest at the end of summer and during the first dry autumn months. If the ranking of the Bulgarian waterfalls considers only the ones flowing all-year-around, then Skakavitsa Waterfall will be in one of the top places. It is also remarkable due to one more specificity. Instead of becoming smaller as a result of the destructive force of the water that breaks the rock foundation – a process easily noticeable for gigantic waterfalls such as Niagara and Victoria Waterfalls, the waterfall has added to its size. It is due to the waters of Shiroki Dol River enriched in the calcium carbonate while flowing through rock formations of Triassic limestone and dolomite stones. While running down and sprinkling in the form of fine drops along the waterfall and as a result of the change in the speed of the water, some of the calcium carbonate dissolved in these drops is deposited in thin layers, which gradually cover the rock and everything on it. This is how travertine formations and rocks are formed, which may reach more than one meter of thickness in certain spots. At the foot of the waterfall it could be found that thin crust of calcium carbonate covers some of the living mosses.

The Orthodox Christian Church Saint Dimitar is perched artistically on the terrace, in immediate proximity to the water fall. The church was built by Master Georgi Manchov in 1892 on the foundations of an older late medieval church and its frescoes and ancient Bulgarian writings are still preserved.

The improved transport and pedestrian access to Polska Skakavitsa Waterfall Natural Landmark achieved through rehabilitation of a municipal road section, construction of eco-trails, parking place and resting and observing zones affords visitors an opportunity to really enjoy the waterfall beauty and its surroundings. Starting your tour along the eco-trail provided with resting and observing zones will reveal the entire view to the waterfall from all accessible sides. The path along the waterfall will also take you to several small caves and niches. Legends tell us that some of these were the home of monks during the Middle Ages, including of St. Yoan Rilski.

Pedestrian routes provide a possibility for knowing the region's natural resources, which is a home of many rare amphibians and reptiles protected and included in the Red Book. 21 species have been found so far. Walking along the trail in spring and autumn it can be easily seen European snake-eyed skinks hiding behind the leaves. The Green Lizards are prowling for their prey in the bushes or the rich vegetation. Wall Lizards are active even on warm winter days. The snakes in the area are to be seen less often in the area of the waterfall – Horned Viper, Grass and Dice Snakes, Aesculapian Snake and Caspian Whipsnake. There are at least 5 kinds of Frogs and Toads, their eggs and tadpoles around the flood areas near the river. Unfortunately, Tortoises are to be seen more rarely, but even if they are not on the trail, if you are lucky, you will certainly catch a glimpse of a Grecian or Hermann's Tortoise on the slopes around.

More than one third of all birds found in Bulgaria live in the Zemen gorge. Many of them can be seen in immediate proximity to the waterfall or in the gorge, along the way there and in this part of Polska Skakavitsa Village. The Dipper, Kingfisher, Long-tailed Tit, Wood Nuthatch can be seen here all year. The farthest northern habitat of the rock mouse in Bulgaria is in the Zemen gorge (including in the area of the waterfall). The secluded and inaccessible spots along the river are the home of another


Long-legged Buzzard

rare, protected species – the otter. The multiple rock cracks, holes and small caves are the home of many bats, and for some of them the gorge and the rock formations around the waterfall are the permanent habitat throughout the year, and for others – they are a migration route and place where they spend the winter.

It takes only a couple of hours walk along the trail surrounding the waterfall, along the slopes to Struma River and around it in May-June to see more butterflies than those existing all over the British Isles. Apart from the huge variety of insects (more than 710 species of butterflies, 610 of which are moths, detected with the light traps at Polska Skakavitsa Railway Stop), many other invertebrates – spiders, snails, crustaceous have been found here. The insignificant human impact accompanied by the non-pollution and destruction of habitats is the reason for the preserved populations of the animal species included in Bulgaria's Red Book and in various European and international environmental protection directives and papers. Many species protected by law can be found here – Southern Festoon (***Zerynthia Polyxena***), Large Copper, Large Blue, Jersey Tiger, Stag Beetle and many others.

Colony of Schreibers' Bent-winged Bat

Dipper

Be careful when you are taking a walk – observe, photograph, but do not catch and disturb the wild animals. Protect their habitats and shelters! Our homes would not survive without them too.

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A Sustainable Joint Future

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