

**BOOK REVIEWS**

Biserkov, V., Gussev, C., Popov, V., Hibaum, G., Roussakova, V., Pandurski, I., Uzunov, Y., Dimitrov, M., Tzonev, R. & Tsoneva, S. (eds) 2015.

**Red Data Book of the Republic of Bulgaria. Vol. 3. Natural Habitats.**

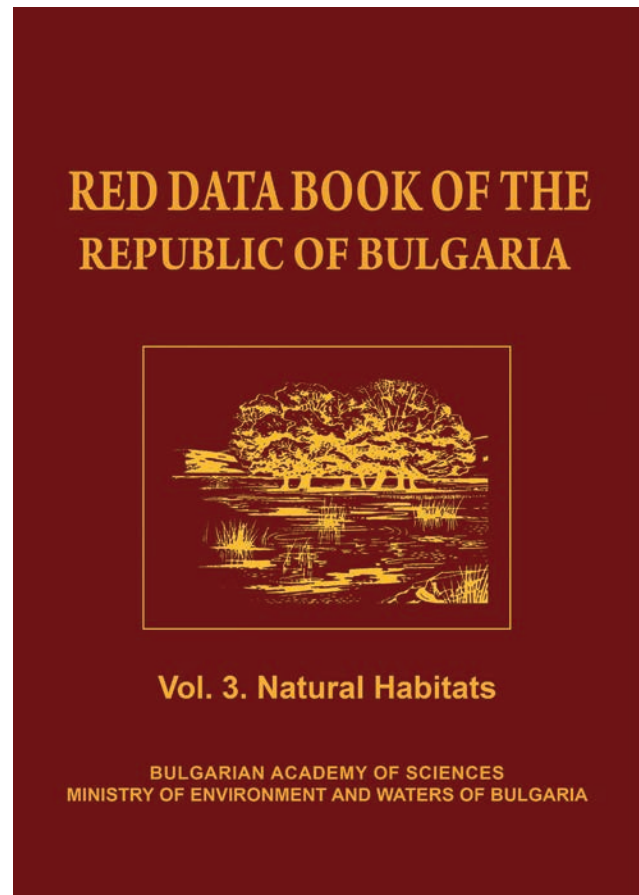
BAS & MoEW, Sofia. (English ed.: ISBN 978-954-9746-23-5 (IBER – BAS), 978-954-8497-19-0 (MoEW))

**Milan Chytrý**

Department of Botany and Zoology, Masaryk University,  
Kotlářská 2, CZ-611 37 Brno, Czech Republic,  
e-mail: chytry@sci.muni.cz

The first Bulgarian Red Data Books for plant and animal species were published already in 1984 and 1985, respectively. Due to increased environmental pressures and associated changes in the conservation status of species, as well as to new scientific knowledge and political changes both within the country and internationally, an update of the national Red Data Books was clearly needed. Therefore, a team of top national biodiversity experts started work on a new edition in 2004, which resulted in a set of three extensive and information-rich volumes, each published in both Bulgarian and English version (a great favour to us foreigners!). These volumes have already been available on Internet or in electronic versions for about five years until they finally appeared in a full-colour printed edition in 2015. The first volume comprises plants and fungi and the second is devoted to animals, this time with considerable attention paid also to invertebrates. The third volume is entirely new, comprising natural habitats, and I will focus on this innovation here.

Volume 3 contains basic information about 166 habitats that were identified as being of conservation importance in the country. This new national habitat classification system was developed on the basis of the EUNIS (European Nature Information System) habitat classification used by the European Environment Agency. Because EUNIS has many imperfections, especially in East and South European habitats, the authors of the Bulgarian Red Data Book used it as a general framework to which they added new habitat types or subtypes, or modified habitat type names wherever needed. This was obviously the optimal approach.



The final classification included 11 marine habitats, 8 coastal habitats, 21 inland water habitats, 6 habitats of mires, bogs and fens, 32 habitats of herbaceous, lichen or moss communities, 32 scrub habitats, 40 forest habitats, and 16 inland rock habitats.

In addition to the habitat classification system, the authors also developed an original system for habitat assignment to threat categories, using such criteria as geographical distribution and area occupied, fragmentation, changes in various habitat parameters, restoration capacity, stability, and the role in the preservation of endangered species. These cri-

teria led to habitat assignments to the categories of critically endangered (CR), endangered (EN), vulnerable (VU) and near threatened (NT). The criteria and thresholds used are different from the IUCN methodology for Red List assessment of ecosystems (Keith et al. 2013, PLoS One 8: e62111) and from a modified version of these criteria that is currently used in the project of the “Red List of European habitats”, because the Bulgarian habitat assessment was completed before these methodologies were published. However, the basic principles are very similar and the Bulgarian approach, with a transparent indication of the criteria used for assessment of each habitat, represents a significant pioneering attempt in habitat Red List assessment.

The descriptions of individual habitat types follow the structure that has been proved as optimal in habitat catalogues of various European countries, giving crosswalks to other habitat classification schemes, indication of conservation status and threat category, basic description of the habitat, list of characteristic taxa, description of conservation importance, threats, conservation measures taken and needed, and basic references. Distribution in the country is shown in a grid map with 10×10 km UTM cells based on the original data provided by the authors. General physiognomy of each habitat is shown in illustrative colour photos.

In many respects, Volume 3 of the Bulgarian Red Data Book is similar to the habitat manuals pub-

lished in some European countries over the last 15 years. Nevertheless, it represents a considerably bigger step forward in biodiversity research than in other countries. Most European countries have a long tradition of vegetation survey following the Braun-Blanquet approach and established vegetation classification system, which can be relatively easily translated into classification systems of terrestrial habitats. Due to a different scientific tradition, Bulgaria did not have such knowledge base and the first national vegetation classification system according to the Braun-Blanquet approach was published only in 2009 (Tzonev et al., *Phytol. Balcan.* 15: 209-233). Thus the habitat classification system of the Red Data Book is a great achievement and real milestone for biodiversity research in Bulgaria and an important novel contribution to this research on the European scale. It has already proved to be an invaluable source of information in the current project of the “Red List of European habitats”. Thirty-two authors of the Red Data Book, most prominently perhaps Chavdar Gushev, Veska Roussakova, Rossen Tzonev and Marius Dimitrov, can be congratulated.

Now it is important that the knowledge included in the Red Data Book will be applied for wise conservation planning and actual protection of threatened habitats and species. I sincerely hope that it will contribute to preservation of the unique biological diversity in Bulgaria.

---

Alexandra Kiselkova

## Changes in the Names of Physicogeographical Sites in Bulgaria 1878–2014

Trud Publishers, Sofia, 296 pp, ISBN: 9789543984015 (in Bulgarian)

[Александра Киселкова. „Промени в наименованията на физикогеографски обекти в България 1878–2014 г.“, Издателство „Труд“, София. 296 с., ISBN: 9789543984015]

Dimiter Ivanov

Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Acad. Georgi Bonchev St., bl. 23, 1113 Sofia, Bulgaria, e-mail: dimiter@bio.bas.bg

Many natural historians and Nature- and tourism-lovers have probably happened to get misled and failed to find their bearings and the places they have been looking for, even with map in hand. Directions of local dwellers are also not of much help, because they do not coincide with the names of localities, peaks and rivers on the map. The reason is that the names of many natural sites have been changed more than once and in the maps and guidebooks published at different times they figure with different place names, while at the same time being known unofficially with others. Botanists, zoologists, ecologists, geographers, geologists and many other researchers related professionally to this theme encounter difficulties along these lines.

This publication is an encyclopedical guidebook developed jointly by the Bulgarian Encyclopedia Scientific Information Centre with the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Trud Publishers. It was intended to help readers find their bearings among the different names of physicogeographical sites on the territory of Bulgaria. This guidebook is the first publication reflecting all changes in the names of the natural sites since the Liberation (1878) and until the end of 2014. It will facilitate orientation, as well as any further publications (books, maps, etc.) and will be of help to all whom it may concern.

The guidebook comprises 4439 entries divided into two parts. Each entry contains information about the geographical and administrative location of the site, its earlier name and the documents regulating its renaming.

The First Part includes 3388 entries reflecting the documented renamings. The main entries are entitled with the official names of the physicogeographical sites; contain complete information about the earlier



names, the used synonyms, and refer to the documents they were renamed with. Small entries referring to the main entries are named with the earlier names of the physicogeographical sites.

The Second Part comprises 1051 entries about natural sites known with two or more popular names (which is the reason for occasional erroneous identification of the site), and with names which got popular without official documentation.

The guidebook is the first step towards introducing some order in toponymy by bringing together all documents on the subject, as well as order and clarity in the names of the natural sites.

