

National Parks

National parks are the public lands or bodies of water of special environmental, historical and other importance, which bear the status of governmental institutions. They serve to the purposes of environmental protection, educational, scientific, cultural researches, etc. protecting environment and serving the educational, scientific, cultural and other purposes.

Name: Hirkan National Park

Year of foundation: 2004

Area (hectare): 21435

Location: Within the territory of Lankaran and Astara administrative districts.

Brief description: The Hirkan National Park is in Lankaran natural region and protects the landscapes of humid subtropics. The Hirkan National Park consists of valley area of Lankaran lowland and mountainous landscape of Talysh Mountains.

The Lankaran natural region has rich fauna and flora including many rare and endemic species.

Flora of the park consists of 1, 900 species including 162 endemic, 95 rare and 38 endangered species. There are the iron tree, three-thorned acacia (*Gleditschia tricanthos*), *Zelkova*, *Quercus Castaneifolia*, *Fircus hircanys*, etc.

There are many endemic rare animals, particularly, among the representatives of ground mollusks and non-flying insects. The birds endemism is well represented, up to subspecies level, while the species level has a relatively poor representation. The main protected objects are the natural complexes of lowland and low mountainous forest areas of the Lankaran natural region, including the unique well preserved plot of lower forest, the ecosystem of rare forest of the Hirkan type.

Name: Shirvan National Park

Year of foundation: 2003

Area (hectare): 54373,5

Location: Within the territory of Salyan administrative district as well as Garadagh and Neftchala districts of Baku city.

Brief description: The Shirvan National Park was established on the base of the Shirvan State Reserve founded in 1969 and neighbouring areas. The reserve's activity is focused on the protection and reproduction of the Persian gazelle (*Gazella sulgutturosa*), waterfowl birds and typical plant biotypes of the Shirvan Lowland. The area is 25800 hectares, of which 3500 hectares are water reservoirs. The territory of the park used to be at the bottom of the Caspian and at present it is an accumulative plain, which is 20-25 m below sea level with a slight increase in the relief westwards. In terms of climate the park lies in an area of moderate warm semi-desert and arid steppe. Summers are hot and dry and winters are moderate and dry.

In the park there are several types of vegetation. The desert type is represented by *Halocnemum*, *Halostachys* and *Salicornia* formations developed on solonchaks. *Halocnemum* vegetation occupies about 40% of the territory of the park. The main species is the *Halocnemum strobilaceum*. The *Halostachys* phytocenosis has a more complicated structure and a richer species composition than *halocnemum*. At the tops of the hills *halostachys* grows and the slopes are covered by cereals and motley grass from the ephemeral group.

Salicornia vegetation has developed in a small area of the central part of the park as a result of wet salines and the high level of ground waters. As well as *Salicornia europaea*, there is also *rankenive* and *tonkokhstnik*.

The semi-desert type of vegetation is represented by formations of *sveda* and ephemeral wormwood. The latter formation, which occupies 40% of the park area, has the richest species composition. Wormwood dominates, and among ephemera 20-25 species are met, including mast cereals: *Poa bulbosa*, *Bromus*, wall barley (*Hordeum leporinum*), etc.

Meadow-type vegetation is developed in the park on chals (humid lowerings on the relief). The herbage is two-layered and is formed of *Alhagi* (first layer) and *Aeluropus repens* (second layer). In some places *Artemisia* and wall barley (*Hordeum leporinum*) are found.

The fauna is poorly studied. Among amphibians there are green toad, *Hylidae* and lake frog. Among reptiles there are swamp, Caspian and Mediterranean turtles, lizard, water snake (*Natrix natrix*) and water snake, *Vipera lebetina* and others. The ornitofauna is poorly studied, but according to the existing data there are bustard (*Otides*), *Francolinus*, little bustard (*Otis tetrax*), white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*), peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*), saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*) and *Pterocletes orientalis*. In winter, there are many migratory birds on the water bodies: gray goose (*Anser anser*), mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*), pintail (*Anas acuta*) and others.

Administrative Department of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

Among rare mammals species there are Persian gazelle (*Gazella sulguturossa*), wild boar, wolf, jackal, jungle cat (*Felis chaus*), fox, badger, European hare and others. Persian gazelle (*Gazella sulguturossa*), *Francolinus francolinus*, bustard (*Otidis*), little bustard (*Otis tetrax*), white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*), peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*), saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*) and Mediterranean turtle are listed in Red Book.

The main protected objects are the natural semi-desert complexes of the south-eastern Shirvan, with the world's biggest population of Persian gazelle (*Gazella sulguturossa*) and the water-wading ecosystem, which is a place of nesting, a migration route and wintering area for many valuable bird species (western part of the Shor-Gel Lake).

Name: Ag-Gel National Park

Year of foundation: 2003

Area (hectare): 17,924

Location: Within the territory of Agjabedi and Beylagan administrative districts.

Brief description: The Ag-Gel National Park was established for the preservation of migrating routes, areas of wintering and nesting of waterfowl and wader birds, as well as for breeding of commercial fish species. The area of 4400 hectares covers the water area of Lake Ag-Gel. Lake Ag-Gel (white lake) reserve is situated in the Mill steppe of the Kura-Araks Lowlands, it may be called an "ornithological oasis": this is not only a reserve area but one of the most important places of wintering in the Republic.

The Mill Steppe surrounding the lake is a slightly hilly accumulative plain, where mostly semi-desert and arid steppe type: summer is warm and dry, winter is cool. Twenty fish species inhabit the reserve: pike, erythroculter, mongolicus, carp and others. Earlier, when the lake was connected with the River Kura, the Ichthiofauna was richer. Among amphibians, green toad, hylidae, lake trod and others inhabit the reserve. Among reptiles the Caspian and swamp turtles, common and water grass snakes occur. There are 134 bird species in the orilitofauna of the reserve, including 89 nesting birds. There are more than 30 specimens of charadriiformes and 24 specimens of anseriformers. Among the birds occurring here there are species included in the "Red Book" – *Francolinus*, white-tailed eagle, white pelicans (*Pelicanus onocrotalus*), Dalmatin pelicans (*Pelicanus crispus*) and others.

Among mammals, represented by 22 species, wild boar, coypu and jungle cat (*Felis chaus*) are common, Unique colonial nesting places of Ciconifonnes and Totimplate birds (*Pelecanifonnes*) are preserved here, which are of great scientific and practical interest.

The main protected objects are the water – swamp ecosystem of Lake Ag-Gel, places of mass nesting, places of rest during migration and wintering for waterfowl and coastal birds.

Name: Ordubad National Park

Year of foundation: 2003

Area (hectare): 12131

Location: Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, within the territory of Ordubad administrative district.

Brief description: The Ordubad National Park was established for the preservation and restoration of the number of Transcaucasian moufflon, bezoar goat (*Capra aegagrus*), Leopard, brown bear, Transcaucasian health cock, hyena and *Tetraogallus*. All the species are listed in the Red Book of the Republic.

Name: Absheron National Park

Year of foundation: 2005

Area (hectare): 783

Location: Azizbeyov district of Baku city, Absheron peninsula.

Brief description: The Absheron National Park was established on the base of Absheron State Nature Preserve for the protection and restoration of the number of migrant and wintering waterfowl-wader birds, as well as to protect Caspian seal rookeries.

Name: Altyaghach National Park

Year of foundation: 2004

Area (hectare): 11035

Location: Within the territory of Khyzy and Siyazan administrative districts.

Brief description: The Altyaghach National Park was established to protect the landscape of the south-eastern ridge of the Major Caucasus and to restore diversity of flora and fauna. Such mammals as the roe deer, bear, wild boar, lynx, coon, fox, etc. and some of migrant birds are to be found on the territory of this park. Many of these species are listed in the Red Book of Azerbaijan.