

BRIEF INFORMATIONS

CAVE CONSERVATION IN HUNGARY

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Introduction

The problem of the protection of cave formations has been occurring ever more frequently since early last century. However, the demand for the legislative settlement of cave protection only became articulated with the advent of regular cave exploration and research in this century.

The first draft for a cave protection act was outlined by the Hungarian Speleological Society, under the guidance of Ottokár Kadić in 1929 and introduced to the then authority, the Ministry of Land Cultivation. The draft consisted of 5 chapters and 20 sections with provisions on the (state) ownership, research (restricted to the Speleological Institute and its comissionees), guarding, utilization, management and protection (only for caves of particular value) of caves, the punishment of violations of the act, and on the establishment of a Speleological Institute. It is regrettable that the draft was lost in the maze of ministerial bureaucracy and never came into force.

Another great initiator of cave protection was Károly Kaán, father of Hungarian nature conservancy. Commissioned by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences he prepared a treatise entitled 'Nature conservancy and natural monuments' in which he presented the natural monuments worth protection and proposed a nature conservation act. Of the

more than 300-page volume, published in 1931, 42 pages are devoted to the description of the 32 major caves known at that time.

The first decree on cave protection was the Forest Act of 1935, which included nature conservation tasks under heading six. It states that caves of unique character and scientific value as well as their surface catchments, if the need arises, can be put under protection; the exploration of a cave must be reported to the Ministry of Land Cultivation and for cave exploration permission is needed from the Ministry.

The first cave (the Baradla-Domica) was declared protected in 1940. Up to 1961 21 decrees were made to extend protection to 34 caves.

The first independent nature conservation act came into force in 1961 and its novelty lay in the fact that it stated that all caves were under protection in Hungary.

Valid legislation on nature conservation

The tasks and activities concerning caves are regulated by the nature conservation law decree of 4/1982 and the government decrees nos 8/1982 and 58/1986 and the statutes issued by the Minister of the Environment and Water Management.

A cave is legally defined as 'a natural cave in the rocks of the Earth's crust which has a longitudinal



Fig. 1. Protected karst areas and increased protected caves in Hungary

1. National Park: 1. Bükk, 2. Aggtelek
2. Landscape Protection Area: 3. Lázbérc, 4. Vértes, 5. Gerecse, 6. Pilis, 7. Buda, 8. Keszthely
3. Nature Conservation Area: 9. Surface of Pál-völgy Cave 10. Surface of Szemlőhegy Cave, 11. Tata, Kálvária Hill, 12. Vértesszőlős, settling of prehistoric man, 13. Dunaalmás quarries, 14. Surface of Tapolcai-tavas Cave, 15. Űrkút paleo-karst, 16. Darvas Lake (Nyírad paleo-karst), 17. Surface of Abaliget Cave, 18. Szársomlyó Hill, 19. Melegmány Valley
4. Increased protected Cave (mountain/cave's number) 1/40 = Bükk, 2/15 = Aggtelek, 3/1 = Cserhát, 4/1 = Mátra, 5/3 = Villány, 6/3 = Mecsek, 7/13 = Bakony, 8/2 = Vértes, 9/8 = Gerecse, 10/10 = Pilis, 11/12 = Buda

axis exceeding 2 m and whose dimensions allow human entry. All caves are of national value, if it is necessary, the surface area of the cave can also be declared protected; by its scientific value, economic importance or endangered position a cave and its surface area can be placed under strict protection by the Minister of Environment and Water Management. (In Hungary there are 108 caves under protection at present).

If the maintenance of protection is not in the interest of nature conservation or conflicts with an economic interest, this (strict) protection can be lifted by the Minister. The discovery of a new cave or the exploration of a new cave section must be reported to the nature conservation authority within eight days. A cave can be declared a medicinal cave jointly by the Minister of Health and the Minister of the Environment and Water Management. A permit from the area nature conservation authority is necessary for research, experimentation, collection, diving in caves and for visits to caves not open to the public (that is a non-touristic or closed cave, or a cave in a closed protective zone where entrance is prohibited by sign). Those having permission to explore caves have to report their activities annually. Permission from the Ministry is necessary for closing, developing, utilizing caves,

removing, utilizing, evaluating and exporting cave formations.

Organisation of nature conservation

The protection, management, utilization and other tasks prescribed in the Act are the responsibility of two national parks, the Aggtelek and the Bükk National Parks, to the east of the Danube and five Environmental Protection and Water Management authorities (seated in Budapest, Győr, Szombathely, Székesfehérvár and Pécs) west of the Danube.

The professional management and control of the national parks and the tasks of the second-rank authority, in addition to those included in the decrees, are performed by the Ministry or its Speleological Institute.

Other regulation

Cave protection is also promoted by a series of other legal documents. The Water Management Act regulates water colouring, diversion, sampling and abstraction. The act on the protection of museum finds states that when (paleontological or archaeological) finds are recovered work in the cave must be stopped and the finds given over to the museum.

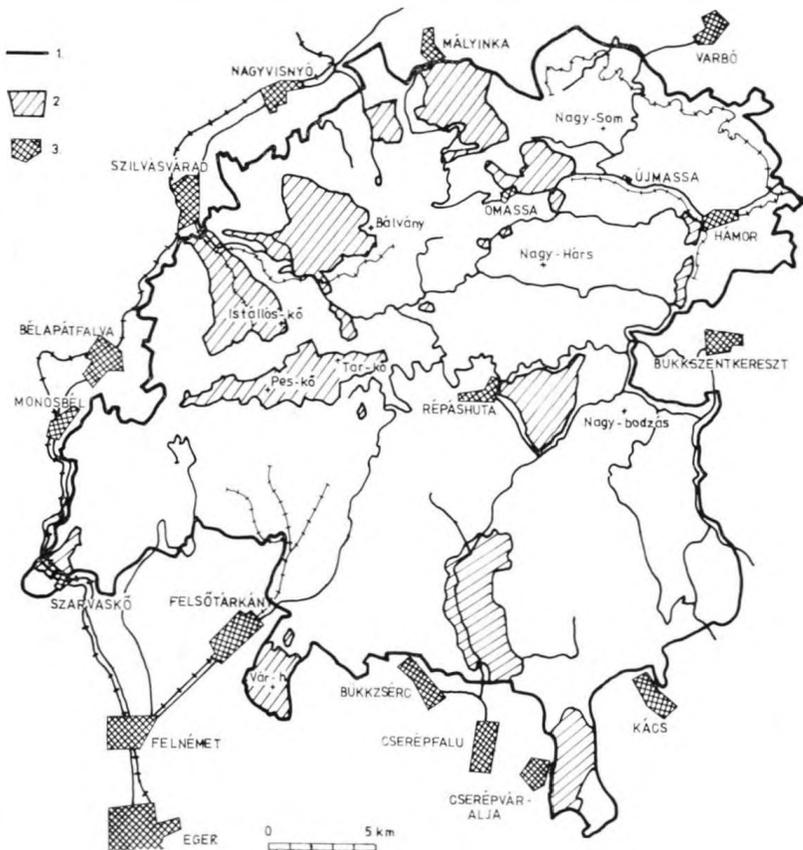


Fig. 2. Bükk National Park.
1. Boundary of national park,
2. Increased protected area,
3. Settlement

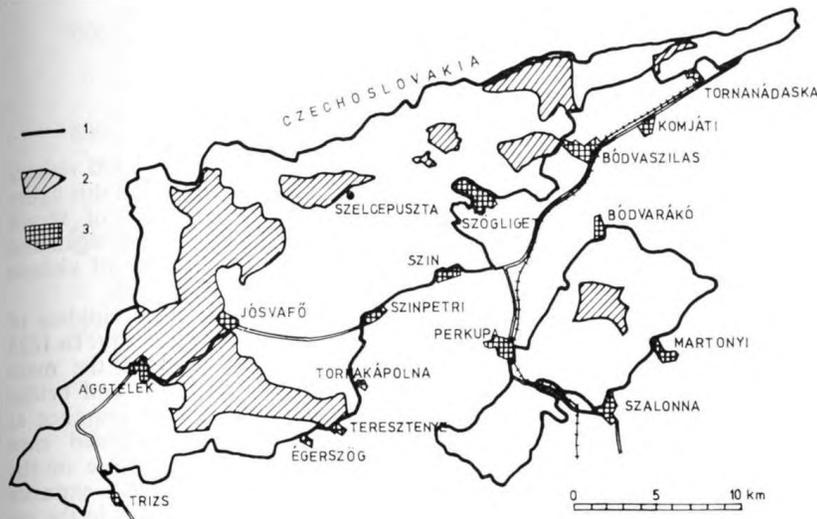


Fig. 3. Aggtelek National Park, 1. Boundary of national park. 2. Increased protected area 3. Settlement

The work can only be resumed with the permission of the museum.

Cave protection is promoted indirectly by the declaration of certain animal species (strictly) protected. All bat species enjoy protection in Hungary and their theoretical value ranges from 1,000 to 3,000 forint. Their disturbance, capture or destruction is punished by law.

Sanctions in nature conservation

Exploration, utilization and transformation of caves without permission, the neglect of the duty to report, and destroying cave formations are an offence and involve fines of up to 10,000 forint.

If these activities lead to large-scale damage or destruction of the cave, then the action is a crime and is punishable by a prison sentence of one to three years duration.

If a legal entity or an organisation carries out an activity in a cave which leads to damage, a nature conservation fine has to be paid with a maximum rate of 100,000 forint per 100 m² affected.

Landscape Protections Areas including karstic surfaces

| Name | Year of foundation | Area (hectare) | Strictly protected area (hectare) |
|-----------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Buda | 1978 | 10,234.0 | 1674.5 |
| Gerecse | 1977 | 8,617.4 | 417.2 |
| Keszthely | 84 | 2,711.0 | — |
| Lázbérc | 1975, 1986 | 3,634.0 | — |
| Pilis | 1978 | 23,322.8 | 6183.3 |
| Vértés | 1976 | 13,722.6 | 1035.9 |

Nature Conservation Areas on karstic surfaces

| Name | Year of foundation | Area (hectare) |
|--|--------------------|----------------|
| Dunaalmás quarries | 1977 | 230.1 |
| Surface of Abaliget Cave | 1941 | 1.0 |
| Darvas Lake (Nyirád paleokarst) | 1971 | 34.0 |
| Melegmány Valley | 1957 | 709.0 |
| Surface of Pál-völgy Cave | 1944 | 1.0 |
| Sas Hill | 1958 | 30.0 |
| Vértesszőlős, settling of prehistoric mean | 1976 | 38.4 |
| Tata, Kálvária Hill | 1958 | 26.0 |
| Szársonlyó Hill | 1944 | 125.0 |
| Surface of Szemlő-hegy Cave | 1957 | 0.5 |
| Surface of Tapolcai-tavas Cave | 1942 | 3.0 |
| Úrkút paleokarst | 1951 | 6.0 |

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