

Phytogeographical and phytocoenological analysis of the threatened plant taxa in the flora of the Vlasina plateau (SE Serbia)

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Abstract:

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In analysing the flora of the Vlasina plateau, it was determined that this area contains 956 species, 23 subspecies, 32 varieties and 28 forms of vascular plants. The data shows the exceptional floristic riches of this territory. Among these species, there are 91 species (9.52%) which may be categorized as under threat in the flora of Serbia. Critically endangered taxa (Cr) are especially interesting because their sanctuary in Serbia is only in the Vlasina plateau. This group includes the following species: *Betula pubescens*, *Elatine triandra*, *Utricularia minor*, *Cirsium helenioides* and *Carex limosa*. All these species have the Boreal type of distribution and live in wetlands.

Key words: flora, Serbia, threatened plant taxa, Vlasina plateau

Introduction

The Vlasina plateau is situated in southeastern Serbia between Vardenik, Čemernik, Plana and Bukova Glava mountains (**Fig. 1**). Geologically, the greater part of Vlasina plateau is uniform area and it is made of metamorphic rocks, the most frequent of them being schists, rarely gneisses, andesites and dacites (Petković et al., 1977, Dragišić, 1997). Vlasina plateau is in the zone of brown forest land (dystric cambisol), but characteristic soil is peat, which is differentiated in four types: Phragmitetum-type, Caricetum-type, Equisetetum-type and mossy peat (Randelović 1994). The climate of this plateau is a typical continental one (Đukanović, 1967, Randelović & Zlatković, 2010).

Floristically and phytocoenologically, Vlasina plateau is relatively well documented in the

monograph "Flora and Vegetation of the Vlasina plateau" (Randelović & Zlatković, 2010). Also, in this monograph threatened plant taxa are processed. However, phytogeographical and phytocoenological analysis of Vlasina plateau is not made.

Material and methods

List of flora of the Vlasina plateau from Randelović & Zlatković (2010) was used for the analysis. The nomenclature follows Med-Checklist (Greuter et al., 1984-1989) and Flora Europaea (Tutin et al., eds. 1964-1980).

All taxa that occur in the area of the Vlasina are assessed according to IUCN version 3.1 (IUCN, 2001) methods for determining vulnerability at the local level and in Serbia. IUCN Red List criteria were used to classify species according to one of the

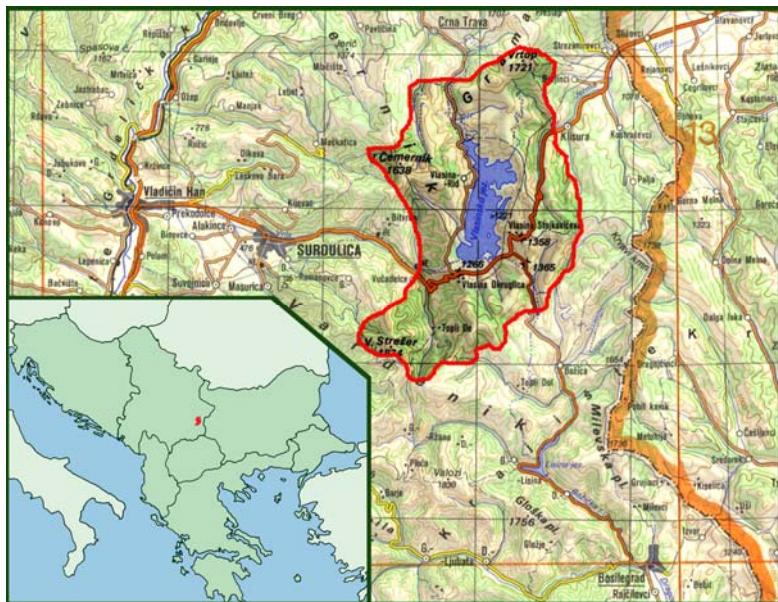


Fig. 1. Geographical position of investigated area

five categories of threat: Extinct in Serbia (EW), Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU) and Near Threatened (NT). If there was insufficient information to make an assessment, the category Data Deficient (DD) was assigned, especially in cases of taxonomic uncertainty.

Area-types, area-groups and life forms are taken from Randelović & Zlatković (2010). Phytocoenological relevance of taxa is determined by Randelović & Zlatković (2010), Horvat et al. (1974) and Apostolova & Slavova (1997).

Results and discussion

Flora of Vlasina plateau contains 956 species, 23 subspecies, 32 varieties and 28 forms of vascular plants. The data shows the exceptional floristic riches of this territory. Among these species, there are 90 species (9.41%) which may be categorized as under threat in the flora of Serbia (Tab. 1) (Randelović & Zlatković, 2010).

The high degree of presence of endangered species that make flora of the Vlasina plateau and the fact that every eleventh species in some way is endangered and that sooner or later it is in danger of disappearing from the territory of Serbia, shows the biodiversity importance of this area. Among other things, it was one of the reasons for classifying the Vlasina plateau in botanical significant areas of Europe(IPA) (Randelović in Stevanović, ed. in Radford, Odé, eds. 2009).

The Red data list of flora of Serbia (Stevanović, ed. 1997) states 53 taxa from the

Vlasina plateau. The first volume of the Red data book of flora of Serbia (Stevanović, ed. 1999), which contains extinct and critically endangered taxa, lists 11 taxa from the Vlasina plateau.

As extinct species from the flora of Serbia, the following species are processed: *Polemonium coeruleum* (Randelović, 1999a), *Dracocephalum ruyschiana* (Diklić, 1999), *Caldesia parnassifolia* (Vukojičić, Janković, 1999) and *Juncus capitatus* (Randelović, 1999). However, later investigations showed that species *Juncus capitatus* (Tomović et al., 2009) and *Dracocephalum ruyschiana* (Lazarević et al., 2009) are not extinct, because they were found on the other localities in Serbia.

The species *Ranunculus lingua* (Stojšić, Panjković, 1999), *Betula pubescens* (Jovanović, 1999), *Elatine triandra* (Blaženčić, Blaženčić, 1999), *Utricularia minor* (Blaženčić, Blaženčić, 1999a), *Cirsium helenioides* (Randelović, 1999c), *Carex limosa* (Randelović, 1999b) and *Sparganium natans* (Blaženčić, Blaženčić, 1999b) are classified as critically endangered.

Phytogeographical analysis

According to phytogeographical analysis (Fig. 2), highest proportions of threatened taxa have Boreal (21 taxa) or Euroasian Mountain (27) type of distribution. Within Euroasian Mountain area-type, Middle-South-European Mountain area-group (19) stands out with the number of taxa, which includes most of the Balkan endemic species (11).

Phytocoenological analysis

The highest proportion of threatened taxa is characteristic of peat vegetation (21), and another 39 for other types of wet vegetation. High presence of threatened taxa (11) is found in the forest vegetation. (Fig. 3).

Analysis of life forms

According to analysis of life forms (Fig. 4) the dominance of hemicryptophytes (33 taxa) is established.

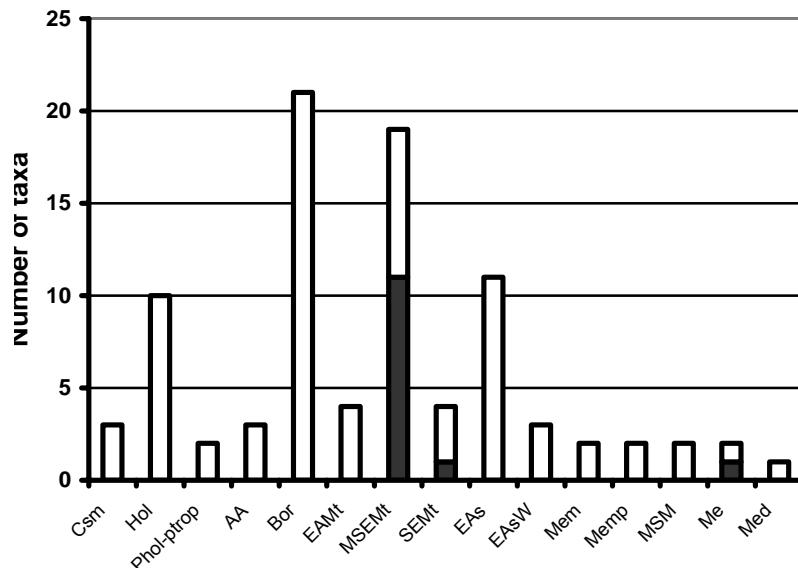


Fig. 2. Phytoogeographical analysis of the threatened plant taxa (Balkan endemic taxa (B) are marked in black). Area types and area groups: **Csm** – Cosmopolitan, **Hol** – Holarctic, **Phol-ptrop** – Palaeoholarctic-palaeotropic, **AA** - Arcto-Alpian, **Bor** - Boreal, **EAMt** - Euroasian Mountain, **MSEMt** - Middle-South-European Mountain, **SEMt** - South-European mountain, **EAs** - Euroasian, **EAStW** - European - West Asian, **Mem** - Middle European-Mediterranean, **Memp** - Middle European-Mediterranean-Pontic, **MSM** - Merridional-Submeridional, **Me** - Middle-European, **Medp** - Mediterranean Pontian, **Med** - Mediterranean

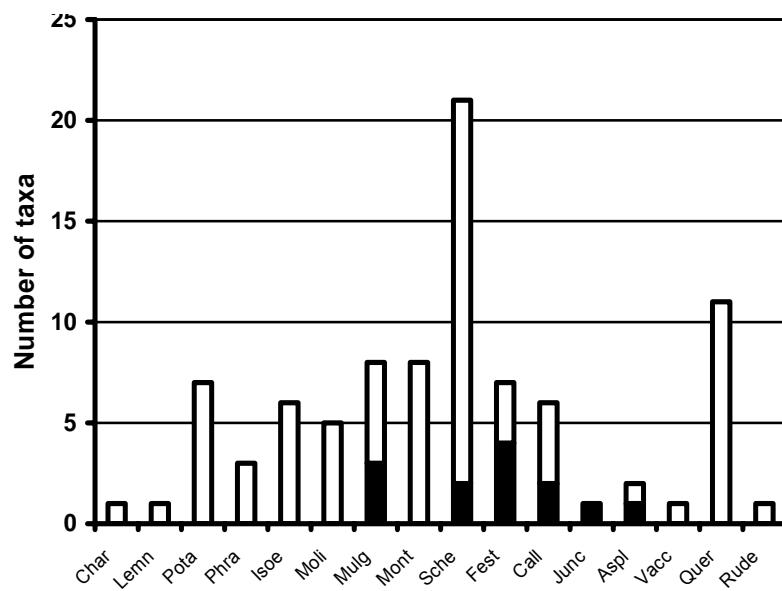


Fig. 3. Phytocoenological analysis of the threatened plant taxa (Balkan endemic taxa are marked in black). Vegetation classis: **Char** - Charetea, **Lemn** - Lemnetea, **Pota** - Potametea, **Phra** - Phragmitetea, **Isoe** - Isoeto-Nanojuncetea, **Moli** - Molinio-Arrhenatheretea, **Mont** - Montio-Cardaminetea, **Mulg** - Mulgedio-Aconitetea, **Sche** - Scheuchzerio-Caricetea fuscae, **Fest** - Festuco-Brometea, **Call** - Calluno-Ulicetea, **Junc** - Juncetea trifida, **Aspl** – Asplenietea trichomanis, **Vacc** - Vaccinio-Piceetea, **Quer** - Querco-Fagetea, **Rude** - Ruderalis

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