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ANIMAL AND PLANT WORLD OF VITEBSK REGION AS A PART OF ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM OF BELARUS

Nature of Belarus is unique and diverse. Vitebsk region lies in the North-East of the republic and possesses its own environmental characteristics and biodiversity. Of its territory 8.6% belongs to especially protected natural objects, representing 21% of all protected areas of the Republic of Belarus. Most of them are related to the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve and National Park "Braslavskie Lakes".

Forests cover 31.9% of the territory of Vitebsk region, 13.3 per cent is meadow, 6.2% are swamps and 10.3% – shrubs. The structural composition of forests includes coniferous (59.6%), pine (38.7%), spruce (20.9%) forests. A significant area of the territory is small-leaved forests (39.5%), birch forests (24.2%). Broad-leaved woods – oak and ash trees are found in the region only on the area of 0.9%.

Forests are the most densely populated ecosystems of the Republic. The animal world is one of the most important biological resources, our national and world heritage. The forests of Vitebsk region are inhabited by brown bear, elk, wild boar, deer, roe deer, badger, lynx, fox, wolve, hare, hedgehogs, pine marten, raccoon dog, beaver, squirrel, etc. Their population here is the highest in the country and the most stable. The territory of the region accounts for 29.1% of the elk population in the country, 22.5% are wild boar, 43.1% – beaver, 32.1% – marten, 46.6% – ferret. A rare representative of the Red Book of Belarus, the European bison, inhabits the territory of the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve (over 30 animals in wildlife).

The green areas in the city of Vitebsk include 6 parks and 39 gardens, a Botanical garden as well as green landscaping of streets and squares. The most prevailing trees are poplar, linden, oak, ash, rowan, birch, etc. Natural forest cover is presented by birch, aspen, alder, spruce, pine.

In parks and squares of the city, in the floodplain of the Dvina river there are encountered 27 species of mammals, about 100 species of birds, 10 species of amphibians, 4 species of reptiles. The most common birds are: dove, sparrow, jackdaw, rook, great tit, starling, etc. In the Vitebsk region and the outskirts of Vitebsk grows a great number of medicinal plant species, such as: sage, calendula, sea buckthorn, coltsfoot, rose hips, peppermint, plantain, pulmonaria officinalis, thyme, immortelle, marsh cinquefoil.

The environmental problems of the city are expressed in the deterioration of atmospheric air, natural waters, pollution of the land.