

Sharri National Park has been protected by law since 2002. Alongside forest fires and environmental degradation, illegal hunting poses the greatest threat to the natural values of this National park. Hunting is prohibited in protected areas in Kosovo, while the Law on Nature Protection does not allow any hunting without a justified reason. Furthermore, the spirit of the law prohibits animals in protected areas from being disturbed, caught, injured, or reduced, while it is also prohibited to catch or kill animals listed as a protected or wild species, apart from in specific circumstances in which permission must be obtained from the ministry.

Illegal hunting in the Sharri National Park can lead to a decrease in the population of animal species within its natural habitat, and even to the danger of extinction for the species. Types of animals in constant danger from illegal hunting are: roe deer, wild goats and the brown bear. Arguments that hunting helps reduce the number of wild animals should be dismissed, as humans are entering a foreign territory in these natural spaces – habitats of another creature in which the ‘anthropogenic effect’ should be minimized. Hunting with dogs is a particularly disruptive form of hunting, as animals are often forced to enter into other habitats, wreaking havoc on the ecological balance of the Park.

However, Kosovo has failed to properly research the fauna in the park, while the Directorate for the Administration of the Sharri National Park is currently without a Fauna Officer. This makes details regarding population figures for certain species unreliable, while any qualitative information about fauna in the park is largely absent.

Although, there have been some positive recent developments in the park, particularly involving local residents, who have begun to immediately respond to gunshots in the park, including by calling the police. It should also be noted that it is not only Kosovar hunters who are endangering the fauna in the Kosovar area of the park. According to observations from the Directorate for the Administration of the Sharri National Park, illegal hunters from Albania pose a direct problem in the area of Dragash, as they operate in the border area from Koritnik to Rudoka. This is not the only area affected by illegal hunting by foreign nationals, as hunters from Northern Macedonia also practice illegal hunting in the mountainous areas of Konjushka and Dupnica as well. This constitutes a violation of Kosovo law. There is also a so-called Buffer Zone: An area of fifty (50) meters from the border of the “Sharri” National Park, where the second protection applies, to help prevent any adverse impacts on the park.

Fatos Lajci of the Environmentally Responsible Action Group NGO (ERA) believes that illegal hunting has left a number of consequences on the Sharri National Park, particularly in terms of endangering habitats. Speaking to KOSID, Lajci emphasized the fact that many

hunters use permits obtained by joining a hunting association in order to obtain a hunting rifle and then use it to hunt in areas where hunting is prohibited, such as the Sharri National Park.

Source: wwfadria.org