

Absolute “zapovednost” – a concept of wildlife protection for the 21st century

V.Boreiko¹, I. Parnikoza¹, A. Burkovskiy²

1) Kyiv ecological-cultural center

2) All-Ukrainian environmental league; E-mail: ecologist@ukr.net

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Abstract: *The article describes the idea and principles of absolute wilderness conservancy as a method of wildlife protection. It also analyzes the main criticisms of this concept.*

Keywords: zapovednost', zapovednik, sanctuary, wilderness conservancy, zapovednik regime.

Introduction

In the last 20 years, a tendency has developed for different social ideas and standards to transfer from Western Europe to Eastern Europe. Sometimes, this situation does not permit alternative viewpoints on global problems to be studied and their solutions to be found. The largest of these problems is the current ecological crisis.

We would like to bring to your attention the idea of absolute zapovednost' i.e. absolute wildlife conservancy as a mechanism of wildlife protection. The term “Zapovednost'” is a Russian word describing a special juridical status or process for creating a nature reserve where any human activity is forbidden. The reserve which has this inviolable protective status is called “zapovednik”. Zapovednost' is usually translated in English as reservation, however, the idea of absolute zapovednost' has another meaning. It is not simply landscape or species conservation. It is conservation of wild natural processes and the course of wild evolution, i.e. conservation of wilderness as a whole. It is more correctly translated as an absolute wilderness conservancy. Consequently, translation of the word “zapovednik” as a “reserve” is also not quite correct. The closest term for definition of zapovednik is “nature sanctuary” or “wildlife sanctuary”, because “sanctuary” means a sacred inviolable place and reflects the concept much better.

The idea of absolute zapovednost' was popular in the 20th century amongst the scientists of Ukraine and Russia, and was to some extent implemented there. Today, there are attempts to discredit this idea, as it contradicts the total commercialization and global human egoism (anthropocentrism). That is why it is very important to save and develop this concept as a certain counterbalance for effective wildlife protection.

Substance of the matter

The world practice of wildlife protection has produced several complementary concepts of protected areas with different purposes (Kozhevnikov, 1999. Boreiko, 2008). However, only one idea has been elaborated directly on behalf of wildlife and its protection against arrogant and omnipresent human intervention, namely absolute zapovednost'.

It was formulated independently by scientists, eco-philosophers and wildlife conservationists of Eurasia and North America. For example, a powerful eco-philosophical foundation of absolute wilderness conservancy (i.e. zapovednost') was elaborated by some American eco-philosophers and ecologists in their writings. They stressed the importance of such a value of wilderness as a freedom, and noted that successful evolutionary development of ecosystems and wildlife is impossible without this value. As early as the mid-19th century, the great American eco-philosopher Henry Thoreau wrote about the necessity of protection of wildlife freedom. In the opinion of the radical ecologist Dave Foreman, it is necessary to enable nature to go its own way, and not to make use of it (Roleston, 1991, 1992b; Boreiko, 2004, 2008).

Holmes Rolstone III in his article “Biology and Philosophy in Yellowstone” wrote about necessity to distinguish between natural and artificial (factitious) interference of men in the wildlife of national parks. For example, he states that regeneration of wolves as predators is more natural than extermination of elks by shooting. The eco-philosopher suggests passing a “declaration of freedom for remaining wildlife” (similar to A. Lincoln’s “Declaring the Objectives of the War Including Emancipation of Slaves in Rebellious States on January 1, 1863”). In his opinion, freedom and autonomy must be guaranteed for wilderness, especially in sanctuary areas (Rolston, 1992a).

The eco-philosopher Jack Turner criticizes the administrations of those national parks where the main principles are control, management and arrangement of tourist recreation, but not the protection of wildlife freedom. In his opinion, such a controlled reserved wildlife is a profanity. He says that people cannot conserve wilderness like they do strawberries – picked, cooked and preserved in jars. To conserve wildlife is to conserve its autonomy and freedom (Turner, 2003).

Russian scientists almost simultaneously with their American colleagues also came to wildlife protection through idea of zapovednost' or absolute wilderness conservancy. Ecologists G.A. Kozhevnikov, N.F. Ramers, A.M. Krasnitskiy, F.R. Schtilmark, S.A. Dyrenkov further formulated the idea, making it suitable for practical use.

In 1908-1909, G.A. Kozhevnikov proposed an ideal regime of entire inviolability (sanctity) and a special type of nature protected area where such a regime should be provided – zapovednik. This regime should be provided by means of:

1. Relatively large area of wildlife.
2. Presence of a special buffer zone around zapovednik.
3. Strict safeguard, prohibition of people passing and transport traffic
4. Prohibition of any practical use of wildlife: hunting, fishing, forest felling, mining operations, sowing, planting, berrying and mushroom picking.
5. Prohibition of any direct or indirect interference in the course of natural processes and phenomena: “Any actions disturbing natural conditions of struggle for existence are inadmissible (...). People need to remove nothing, to add nothing, to improve nothing. It is necessary to grant independence for nature and to observe results for us”.
6. This inviolable regime is established forever. (Kozhevnikov, 1999)

Modern classics of absolute zapovednost’ have proposed some additions to the conception:

1. Indirect human influence on zapovedniks (global pollution, heat effect on atmosphere) should not be considered in maintenance of inviolable status. This also concerns:

- penetration of alien species on the zapovednik territory.
- transformation of conserved ecosystems because of absence of some ecological elements, for example, forest

invasions on meadows in the absence of hoofed animals.

2. Absolute zapovednost’ extends not only to poorly studied areas of wildlife but also to plots of zapovedniks which had considerable anthropogenic influence in the past. In the opinion of F.R. Schtilmark and N.F. Ramers, “absolute zapovednost’ can be performed as an act of renewal, like a reanimation” of natural ecosystems.

3. The idea of absolute zapovednost’ is an ideal. It is necessary to aspire to it in the process of management of any zapovednik. (Ramers, Schtilmark 1978, Schtilmark, 2005, Boreiko, 2010) Nowadays, lots of pseudo-environmental ideas overflow the world, which justify the penetration of business interests into the last areas of wildlife. In this case, wide propagation and application of absolute zapovednost’ are the main way for a real defense of wildlife. Sometimes, the opinion is expressed that the idea of zapovedniks is not modern, that it is anachronism of the Soviet system, and nobody has come to such a form of wildlife protection. However, we believe that this statement is wrong. Today the idea of absolute zapovednost’ is as relevant as ever for countries where large territories of wildlife have remained. Zapovedniks should be established there, but not national parks, because they disagree with the idea of independent existence of wildlife. Neither notorious rational nature management nor ecosystem services but the idea of absolute zapovednost’ should find a widespread application. It is suitable not only for Eurasia and North America but also for other continents which have vast areas of wildlife, such as Antarctica, South America, Africa, Australia and ocean areas.

The last wildlife territories of these continents must be transformed primarily into zapovedniks. It is not



surprising that more and more ecologists from different countries criticize system of national parks, and begin to see the necessity of the formation of territories free from human interference. This particular approach (although in incomplete form) is accepted as a basis for European wildlife protection network “Natura 2000” (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm) or National Wildlife Refuge System of USA (<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>).

Moreover, Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPA) are established on the basis of this ideology, and admittance to them is strictly forbidden even for scientists (http://www.ats.aq/e/ep_protected.htm, http://www.antarctica.ac.uk/about_antarctica/environment/special_areas/index.php).

Discussion and criticism

It is clear that population density and shortage of wild areas prevent the widespread application of zapovednost’ in European Union. However, it may be applied in territories where human activity is limited, for example, in mountains or ocean areas. Countries can unite their efforts and found zapovedniks in their border territories together to conserve as large areas as possible. Today, interest in the idea of zapovednost’ is growing amongst Polish ecologists who are tired of rational nature management and recreational chaos. At the same time, some Ukrainian environmentalists offer to abolish zapovedniks and transform them to national parks (or into their full analogue so called biosphere reserves) (Dovganych Y. 1993, <http://www.nr2.ru/crimea/173962.html>)

Often, the opinion is expressed in Ukraine and some other post-Soviet countries that an inviolable zapovednik regime is inadequate for the protection of endangered plant and animal species. They offer to support certain fixed conditions by means of artificial regulatory measures in nature protected areas. Such a way is also proposed after transformation of zapovedniks into national parks and biosphere reserves. (Dovganych Y. 1993, <http://www.nr2.ru/crimea/173962.html>)

Adherents of absolute zapovednost’ object to this approach because conservation of natural course process and preservation of separate species are not one and the same.

Last century, A.M. Krasnitskiy and S.A. Dyrenkov formulated the principle of purpose differentiation for specially protected natural areas. According to this, there must be not any regulatory or protectorship measures for certain species in zapovedniks. Thus, absolute zapovednost’ aims not only to conserve landscapes and species but first of all the process of wildlife evolution in whole. That is why any human interference in this process is unacceptable. At the same time, regulatory measures can be applied in other types of nature protected areas (national parks, scientific reserves and etc.) (Krasnitskiy, Dyrenkov 1978). Arguments of theorists who support “correction of disturbance through other disturbance” (as S. Dyrenkov called regulatory measures) are completely demolished by hard reality. So far as almost 100 % of recent regulatory actions is evident resource use of wildlife territory under

theoretical protection (like whale hunting of Japan for so called “scientific purposes”). Often resource use prevails over purposes of wildlife protection or directly violates it. For example, mowing is performed with heavy equipment within optimal period of time for high quality of hay, ignoring ecological requirements; commercial harvesting of fine wood is made under pretence of forest health etc.

Opponents of zapovedniks also make the second widespread argument: the inviolable regime of zapovedniks in Ukraine in reality is often not fully adhered to. Is there any sense to maintain such territories? They consider that it had better to legalize a more flexible regime of wildlife protection which takes place, for example, in national parks (<http://www.nr2.ru/crimea/173962.html>). Usually such arguments are made by people sincerely mistaken or by motivated persons who lobby business interests. Each true Ukrainian ecologist knows very well that zapovedniks have the strictest regime of wildlife protection. They are not zoned and this fact excludes the possibility of their re-zoning by somebody who intends to deprive certain lands of a special protected status for their appropriation. The lands of zapovedniks in Ukraine are defined by official borders. All of them have a strict legal regime that makes their protection the most successful but only if their administrations and non-governmental ecological organizations are ready to struggle. In general, it should be used a principle of striving for maximal wilderness and outer defense of wildlife.

One more argument against absolute zapovednost’ is that zapovedniks in Ukraine (as well as in Belarus and European Part of Russia) are small for development of nature in accordance with its laws. However, the examples usually make reference to the smallest plots of remaining grasslands in Donetsk and Luhansk regions (Bondarenko V. and others, 2001) In this case it is important to make the following notes.

- Firstly, Ukraine has not only mentioned small zapovedniks but also large ones, for example, Polesskiy zapovednik includes 20,000 ha (Table 1).
- Secondly, there are no facts which could be show that renewal processes are absent in small areas.
- Thirdly, it is necessary to remember about the strictest regime of wildlife protection in zapovedniks in comparison with other types of nature protected areas.

The opinion is also expressed that people must be not forbidden to visit wildlife areas and their availability should be advertized widely (Butorina N., and others 2007). However, defenders of wildlife have formulated a thesis long ago that the needs of humans and nature are incompatible. Therefore, the existence of wildlife areas inaccessible for man is necessary, and which are not advertised. If closed territories exists for the needs of the army or VIPs, then closed territories must be also established for the truest VIP – NATURE.

One of the main arguments against absolute zapovednost’ is that zapovedniks require expenditures and do not contribute to economical development (Bondarenko V. and others, 2001). Don’t hurry to agree with this statement, because adherents of such arguments

Table 1. List of Ukrainian zapovedniks, their area and location

| Name | Date of establishment | Area (ha) | Region of Ukraine |
|---|------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Nature zapovednik “Gorgany” | 1996 | 5 344 | Ivano-Frankivsk region |
| Dniprovsko-Orilskiy nature zapovednik | 1990 | 3 766 | Dnipropetrovsk region |
| Drevlianskiy nature zapovednik | 2009 | 30 873 | Zhytomyr region |
| Nature zapovednik “Elanetskiy steppe” | 1996 | 1 676 | Mykolayiv region |
| Kazantipskiy nature zapovednik | 1998 | 450 | Autonomous Republic of Crimea |
| Kanivskiy nature zapovednik | 1923 | 2 027 | Cherkasy region |
| Karadagskiy nature zapovednik | 1979 | 2 872 | Autonomous Republic of Crimea |
| Crimskiy nature zapovednik, and its branch “Lebedinnye ostrova” | 1923 | 44 175 | Autonomous Republic of Crimea |
| Luhanskiy nature zapovednik, its branches: Stanychno-Luhanskiy zapovednik, “Provalskiy steppe”, “Striltsivskiy steppe” | 1968 | 2 122 | Luhansk region |
| Nature zapovednik “Medobory” | 1990 | 10 521 | Ternopil region |
| Nature zapovednik “Mys Martian” | 1973 | 240 | Autonomous Republic of Crimea |
| Nature zapovednik “Mykhaylivska Tsilyna” | 2009 | 883 | Sumy region |
| Opukskiy nature zapovednik | 1998 | 1 593 | Autonomous Republic of Crimea |
| Poliskiy nature zapovednik | 1968 | 20 104 | Zhytomyr region |
| Nature zapovednik “Roztochchia” | 1984 | 2 085 | Lviv region |
| Rivnenskiy nature zapovednik | 1999 | 42 289 | Rivno region |
| Cheremskiy nature zapovednik | 2001 | 2 976 | Volyn region |
| Ukrainian steppe nature zapovednik, branches “Khomutovskiy steppe”, “Kamiani mogily” and “Creydova flora” | 1961 | 3 336 | Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya and Sumy regions |
| Yaltynskiy mountain-forest nature zapovednik | 1973 | 14 523 | Autonomous Republic of Crimea |

also should ask questions about existence of real budget spongers: official governmental residencies, VIP state hunting farms and etc.

Zapovedniks are one of the main components of environmental security and national prestige. Moreover, zapovedniks have a considerable scientific importance. In fact scientific research is the only one type of human activity that is admissible in zapovedniks. However, research is mainly conducted in the form of observations (chronicles of nature) to limit human influence on nature. This monitoring has a particular scientific importance because of its provision of long term data. Thus, it is clear that they must be financed by authorities like public health service, rescue service, science, army and etc.

Absolute zapovednost' and grasslands

Steppe ecosystems are very fragmented and subjected to anthropogenic influence much more than other types of ecosystems, for example forests. Absolute zapovednost' requires freedom for nature evolution without interference of human activity. However, the situation in grasslands is very difficult and confused. Neglecting of alien species and absence of hoofed animals mentioned as principles of zapovednost' in recent steppes leads not to natural evolution but rather to evolution of human mistakes and interference consequences. Today, alien tree species (*Robinia pseudoacacia*, *Elaeagnus commutata* and others) are one of the main dangers for the existence of the last steppe areas, as well as the absence of hoofed animals enable them to cover new zapovednik territories.

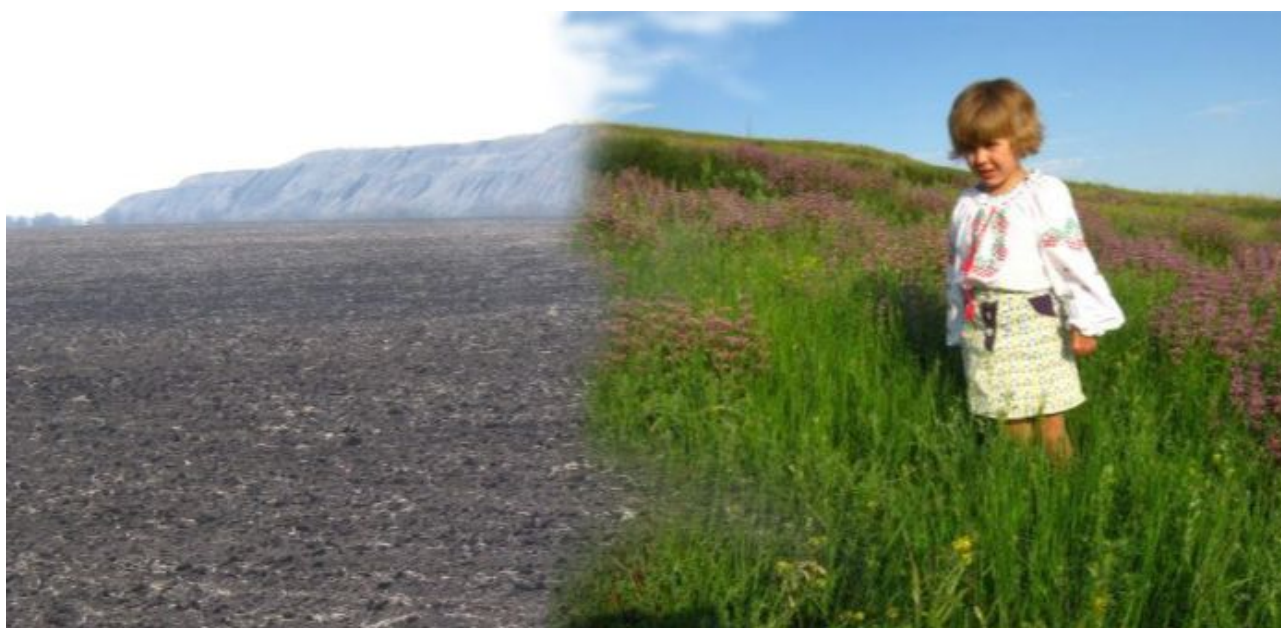
It is also difficult to call the spread of alien tree species an indirect human influence because they are used intentionally in large-scale afforestation. The same can be said about absence of wild hoofed animals which were exterminated by direct human activity.

It seems the best way for zapovednost' in grasslands is modeling of wildlife conditions. That is why it seems relevant using of hoofed animals for support of natural grassland ecosystems, even they are domestic animals. However, it is not all that simple. Firstly, any artificial actions cause temptation to make new ones. If any zapovednik administration allows grazing today, it can allow hay harvesting tomorrow and something else more disturbing zapovednik regime day after today. Such an activity needs very severe control from the side of special environmental state bodies and ecological NGOs.

Secondly, not only human factors but also ecological factors have considerable importance for modeling of wildlife in grassland zapovedniks, especially which have small area. Natural processes are too difficult for simple imitation. As an example can be described attempt to introduce horses in grassland zapovednik "Khomutovskiy steppe". The horses grazed only near drinking place, fed on certain grass species only and reproduced uncontrollably. As a result vegetation cover near drinking place was destroyed. Zapovednik administration also decided to earn money using horses for riding tours. Moreover, horses needed food in winter and administration began to make hay harvesting by using of tractors.

Thus, wild ecosystems as well as grassland ecosystems are very intricate to be modeled with such primitive methods. It is necessary complex of factors: different herbivorous species, different predators and etc. It is very difficult to fulfill this, especially in small grassland areas. Described example concerns only alien species and hoofed animals but it is clear that situation includes lots of many other factors.

We have to acknowledge that absolute zapovednost' for grasslands remains one of the most contested questions. It



Is any chance for future generations to see wild grasslands?

has no general opinion and requires further studying and discussion. Possibly, the most obvious way out is a return of large anthropogenic areas (mainly eroded arable lands) into natural state i.e. land conservation (abandonment). It can give an opportunity for re-introduction of many animal species including the hoofed. Moreover, some time or other, land abandonment in many steppe regions of Europe has no any alternative because of the desertification process which has already begun.

However, nowadays the area of grassland is so small that zapovedniks have exclusive importance for conservation not only certain species but for conservation of their full interaction for renewal of steppes in future and better times.

Conclusion

Accounting all the described above, we argue against:

1. Offences against zapovedniks.
2. Transformation of zapovedniks into national parks or so called biosphere reserves.
3. Regulatory measures in zapovedniks, because they are a key to many abuses for use of resources in nature protected areas.
4. Demands on administrations of zapovedniks to provide protection of certain species through regulatory measures and interference in course of natural processes, and demands to “reconstruct” natural ecosystems by the same artificial measures.
5. Development of any tourism, recreation and large-scale student field programs (practices) on the territories of zapovedniks.
6. Demands on administrations of zapovedniks to make money.
7. Territorial changes of zapovedniks when any their part can be removed from their area, even if it is compensated by other one. Their area must increase only.
8. Appointment of persons who have no biological education to a post of director of zapovedniks.
9. Ignoring of establishment of new zapovedniks in Ukraine and other countries.
10. Application of terminology “zapovednost” and “zapovednik territory” for other types of nature protected areas where regime of zapovednost’ is not appointed: biosphere reserves, natural monuments etc.

If you have questions concerning the idea of absolute zapovednost’ you may ask us by the following e-mail: kekz-office@ukr.net

Information about our Zapovednik school, and rules of participation in it you may find on the web-site of Kyiv ecological-cultural center (in Russian language): <http://ecoethics.ru/shkola-boreyko-voytsehovskogo/>

Nowadays, Ukrainian NGO “Kyiv ecological-cultural center” and Polish NGO “Workroom for profit of all the creatures” make all efforts for propaganda and dissemination of the idea of absolute zapovednost’. They have initiated an international campaign for support and diffusion of this key conception. Every year for this purpose the International Zapovednik School of Boreiko-Voytsekhovskiy is held in Kyiv. The main task of the

school is the development of ideological and eco-philosophical basis for modern wildlife defenders, dissemination of the idea of absolute zapovednost’ and necessity of protection of the last wildlife areas.

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