



## **Implications of Philately in Promoting the Protected Natural Areas (VI) - Piatra Craiului National Park**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Authors BVC and ALP designed the study, performed the literature searches and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author MC managed the analyses of the study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

### **Article Information**

DOI: 10.9734/AJGR/2021/v4i130123

#### Editor(s):

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Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/63919>

**Original Research Article**

**Received 25 October 2020**

**Accepted 30 December 2020**

**Published 11 January 2021**

### **ABSTRACT**

Continuing the series of articles that promote the implications of thematic philately about protected natural areas, we stopped this time, on the Piatra Craiului National Park. As an area of national interest, the Piatra Craiului area has also been immortalized on various post-philatelic effects. From the multitude of philatelic pieces (postage stamps, envelopes on the first day of the show - FDCs, illustrated postcards, occasional envelopes, etc.) that were identified, the reproduction was chosen only of those who contributed to the promotion of tourism potential. From landscapes to species of flora and fauna, of scientific interest and environmental protection, the pieces analyzed come to certify the idea that thematic philately is more than an ambassador of the intrinsic values of an area. In fact, by appealing to philatelic effects, the entire community had to gain in terms of the fact that tourists, mostly from abroad, had already provided access to tourist information and more.

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Keywords: Biodiversity; mountain tourism; natural heritage; philatelic effects; preservation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The history of Piatra Craiului National Park begins quite early. In August 1921, Mihai Haret published in the scientific journal „La Nature“ an article entitled „National Parks in Romania“, where he expressed his hope that the first two national parks would be established by the end of the year. He also notes that „at the moment, the two societies (the Hiking Inn and the Romanian Naturalists' Society) are fighting for the establishment of national parks to be enshrined in law, and the first territories to be: the Letea forest in the Danube delta, the massif Bucegi and that of Piatra Craiului“ 1. The story continues in the next period. In the article „The problem of nature protection in Romania“, published on the occasion of the first congress of naturalists in our country, which took place between April 18-21, 1928, in Cluj, professor Al. Borza noted that „Piatra Craiului near Zărnești is still principally designated to house in its upper area a large alpine reservation of hundreds of jugs. The Botanical Garden Directorate has also

concluded a lawsuit in this regard. Here the particularly rich flora deserves to be taken out from under the ruthless pastoral regime. Only here does the carnation *Dianthus callizonus* grow“ [1].

The Piatra Craiului massif became a nature reserve only later, on March 28, 1938 (Journal of the Council of Ministers no. 645), initially having an area of only 440 ha. The Council of Ministers took this decision „due to the unique character of the massif where rare species such as *Dianthus callizonus*, *Hesperis nivea*, *Minuartia transilvanica*, *Leontopodium alpinum* are found, as well as due to the beauty of the landscape“ [1,2].

The area underwent a subsequent resizing (from 45°30'11"N 25°13'56"E to 45°50'30"N 25°23'22"E), so that, in 1971, the protected area was expanded to 3570 ha, by declaring several nature reserves in the counties of Brașov and Argeș (see Fig. 1) [3]. Subsequently, a project to establish a national park was configured.

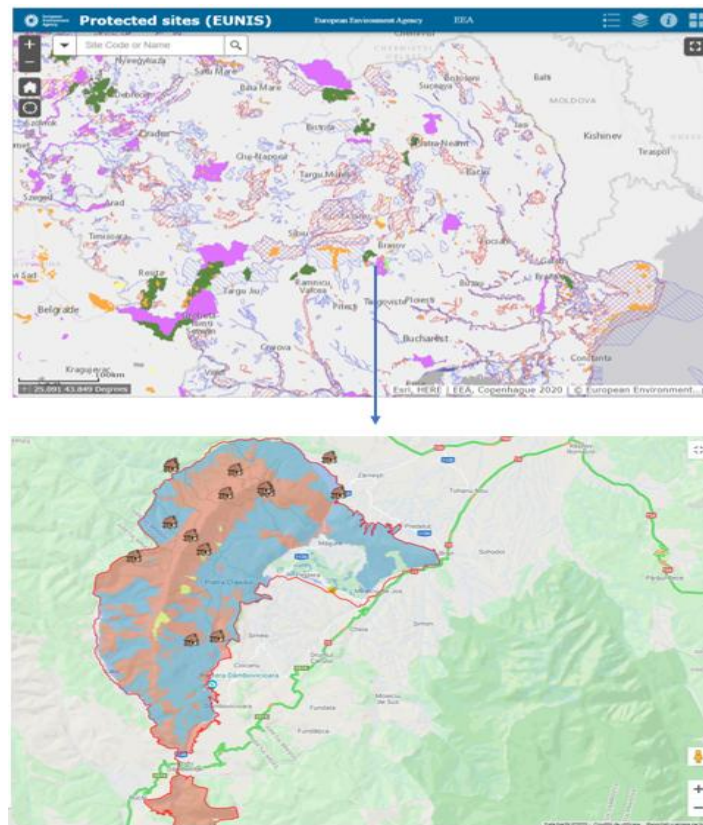


Fig. 1. Reference area of Piatra Craiului National Park (Romania) [1,3]

Thus, the participants in the works of the third scientific session „Nature Conservation on Scientific Bases“, which took place in Brasov between October 14-17, 1975, recommended, „to continue research on the establishment of the Piatra Craiului National Park, through a more thorough collaboration between the interested bodies from Braşov and Arges counties“ [1].

Starting with 1990, Piatra Craiului is declared a national park by Order 7 of the Ministry of Agriculture at that time, along with 12 other parks in Romania. The total surface of the Piatra Craiului National Park is 14766 ha, of which 7807.5 ha in Braşov, and 6958.5 in Argeş County [2-5].

The purpose of designating the Piatra Craiului Massif as a national park is to conserve representative ecosystems in their natural state and create the conditions for recreation, visiting, and education, without these ecosystems being affected. In inhabited areas, the goal is to preserve the landscape resulting from traditional human activities. Starting with 1999, with the start of the specific project, respectively the Biodiversity Conservation Management, the Park administration is established. Due to the variety of plant and animal species, the presence of a large number of habitats of European importance, as well as the way the national park is managed, the Piatra Craiului National Park Administration received, in 2005, the European Diploma of the Council of Europe for Protected Areas, which was renewed for another 10 years in 2011 [6,7].

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The documentation for this paper started from the authors' concerns for ecological education and environmental protection [8,9], and, last but not least, because they love the idea of a harmoniously developed community with care for protected areas [10-13]. Having at hand a series of extremely relevant studies at the national level, both in terms of the management of protected areas [14-16], and the philatelic issues published in catalogs [17-18], the authors decided to extrapolate the respective approaches on the existing ecosystem in the Piatra Craiului National Park (Romania).

The subject of the study, in the form of a philatelic circuit of Piatra Craiului National Park,

is based on the sites that host philatelic content such as Colnect, Delcampe, eBay, Okazii, PicClick, StampWorld, and wopa-plus, which come in addition to the discussion forums and online meetings with other collectors and passionate philatelists. They were kind enough to respond to our requests for information, where the accessed resources left room for interpretations, and to provide us with philatelic materials, including from their collections. As for the identified pieces (mostly illustrated postcards), they undoubtedly helped to promote the area among potential visitors; a simple view constituting a source of information, or even a premise for attracting curiosity about the illustrated image - if it has a correspondence in reality. About this aspect is summarized the beginnings of the role that thematic philately has in the harmonious development of the community, in the care of beauty and nature.

Also, regarding the identified pieces, it should be mentioned that they were once the basis for promoting the protected area, especially the aspects that it encompasses (mountain massifs, peaks, vertical walls with specific vegetation, and other forms of relief among the most varied, species of flora and fauna, etc). The promotion of the area considered in terms of postcards has had some impact on the development of local and regional tourism. Tourists thus have a series of information regarding the possibility to access the area, to cross the area on various specially arranged routes, including finding shelter in mountain refuges and chalets (see Fig. 1). At the same time, postcards remained as souvenirs or even entered the collections of many, thus having even a sentimental value.

Under the given conditions, we focused mainly on those philatelic effects that could expose the local and regional context, starting even with the explanation of the local toponymy - Piatra Craiului (Romanian origins), Königstein (German origins), or The King's Stone (English origins). In the same context of the exhaustive approach, we could find the connection between Romanian thematic philately and postcards marketing (where we perceive philately as a marketing tool). Therefore, the identified pieces were reproduced, somewhat synthetically, to (re)memorize the history and implications of thematic philately, and highlight various marked trails, mountain refuges, limiting factors, and other elements that give uniqueness to the protected natural area.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1 Piatra Craiului National Park from an Ecological Perspective

Piatra Craiului National Park is a protected area of national interest that corresponds to the second category IUCN (as national park), located on the territories of Argeș and Brașov counties [2]. The natural area extends in the northeastern extremity of Argeș county (on the administrative territories of Dâmbovicioara, Dragoslavele, Rucăr communes) and in the southern one of Brașov county (on the territories of Fundata, Moieciu, and Bran communes, as well as that of Zărnești town), near the national road 73A that connects Pitești with Zărnești.

The natural area of the Piatra Craiului Massif was established on March 28, 1938, by the decision published in the Journal of the Council of Ministers no. 645, following that, over time, the protected area will increase its surface in several stages. Finally, in 1990, the area was to be declared a national park and reconfirmed by Law no. 5 of March 6, 2000 (on the approval of the National Spatial Planning Plan - Section III - protected areas) [4]. In 2003, Government Decision no. 230 of March 4 (on the delimitation of biosphere reserves, national parks, and natural parks and the establishment of their administrations) restores the boundaries and area of the national park [5].

Piatra Craiului National Park is an area with steep peaks of metamorphic rock, Jurassic limestone cliffs, rubble, alpine hollows, gorges (Zărnești Gorges, Vlădușca Gorges, Dâmbovicioarei Gorges), caves, swamps Cerdacul Stanciului, Padina lui Calinet, Prăpastiile Zărneștiului, Fântâna Domnilor, Fântâna lui Botorog, La Zaplaz), as results from the erosion or corrosion of the rocks [2,7]; mountain meadows, hayfields, pastures, forested areas. The national park overlaps the site of community importance - Piatra Craiului and includes the nature reserves: Cheile Zărneștilor (protected area of geological, floristic, faunal and landscape interest), Liliacilor Cave, Dâmbovicioara Cave, Avenul din Grind, Dobreștilor Cave, Pe 15, Stanciului Cave and Uluce Cave.

The natural area has several types of habitats - alpine and boreal bushes, edging communities with tall grasses from the plains to the mountains and alpine, alpine and subalpine meadows, mountain meadows, caves where public access

is prohibited 2, such as forests alluvial with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*, Dacian beech forests, forests on a calcareous substrate, acidophilous forests in the mountain region, rocky slopes with vegetation on siliceous rocks, herbaceous and woody vegetation along mountain rivers and calcareous debris and limestone the mountain to the alpine floor - which houses a diverse range of flora and fauna specific to Piatra Craiului.

The flora of the national park consists of plant species distributed in layers, per the geological structure, soil and climate characteristics, geomorphological structure, or altitude:

- Coniferous species: spruce (*Picea Abies*), pine (*Pinus*), fir (*Abies alba*), larch (*Larix decidua*), lime (*Pinus cembra*), yew (*Taxus baccata*);
- Deciduous species with oak (*Quercus petraea* and *Quercus robur*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), linden (*Tilia cordata*), wild chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), elm (*Ulmus glabra*), maple (*Acer platanoides*), juvenile (*Acer campestre*), birch (*Betula pendula*), poplar (*Populus tremula*), mountain alder (*Alnus viridis*), and black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*).

At the level of grasses, the floristic diversity is represented by several species and subspecies of plants, some of which are protected by law or endemic to this area. Some examples of floristic species reported in the park area: Piatra Craiului endemic species (*Dianthus callizonus*, *Dianthus tenuifolius*, *Dianthus gigantei*, *Dianthus glacialis*) queen flower (*Leontopodium alpinum*), mountain peony (*Rhododendron*), bear's foot (*Heracleum palmatum*), strawberry (*Cephalanthera rubra*), fist-shot (*Phyteuma tetramerum*) and leaf-fat (*Pinguicula alpina*).

The park's fauna is diverse and represented by several species of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians and reptiles, some protected by law and on the IUCN red list, such as [2,7]:

- Mammal species: Carpathian bear (*Ursus arctos*), deer (*Cervus elaphus*), deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), black goat (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), lynx (*Lynx lynx*), tree marten (*Martes martes*), fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), common bat (*Myotis myotis*),

wide-eared bat (*Barbastella barbastellus*), long-winged bat (*Miniopterus schreibersii*), mouse-eared bat (*Myotis blythii*), the large horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*), the small horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), the field chimpanzee (*Crocidura leucodon*), the dwarf chimpanzee (*Sorex minutus*), the dwarf mouse (*Micromys minutus*) or mountain chimpanzee (*Sorex alpinus*);

- Bird species: capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), crow (*Corvus corax*), peregrine falcon (*Tetrastes bonasia*), peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), rock snipe (*Prunella collaris*), tufted forest (Asio otus), collared pigeon (*Columba palumbus*), woodpecker (*Alauda arvensis*), screaming eagle (*Aquila pomarina*), mountain eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), common mouse (*Buteo buteo*), bottles (*Carduelis carduelis*), cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), blackbird (*Turdus merula*), grangur (*Oriolus oriolus*), red locust (*Lanius collurio*), codobat (*Motacilla alba*) and trout (Tringa ochropus);
- Species of reptiles, amphibians and fish: field lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), water snake (*Natrix tessellata*), hazel snake (*Coronella austriaca*), blind snake (*Anguis fragilis*), house snake (*Natrix natrix*), viper (*Vipera berus*), yellow-bellied ivory (*Bombina variegata*), crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*), mountain newt (*Triturus alpestris*), Transylvanian common newt (*Triturus vulgaris*), red frog- forest frog (*Rana dalmatina*), red-mountain frog (*Rana temporaria*), fire salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*), and river snipe (*Eudontomyzon mariae*).

### 3.2 Piatra Craiului National Park from a Philatelic Perspective

From a postal-philatelic point of view, the research undertaken on the main e-commerce sites with philatelic content led us to identify the pieces that we reproduced in Fig. 2 [20-25], Fig. 3 [26-32], Fig. 4 [33-39] and Fig. 5 [40-48]. In Fig. 2, the illustrated postcards represent a series of views, from a great distance, on the researched area (Piatra Craiului mountain range), an aspect that is repeated in the examples of illustrated postcards reproduced in Fig. 3.

The illustrated postcards highlight the relief forms, as well as the typical mountain

ecosystem; coniferous forests and lofty ridges are elements that appear repeatedly, to reveal the true nature of the area considered. For the uninitiated viewer, a trip to these lands is more than welcome, as part of the mountain tourism that can be done. The entire area cover the need for recreation and active relaxation, it is known that mountain hiking purifies and removes the daily stress specific to cities, and invites creativity and reflection.

In Fig. 4 in format landscape (a-d), respectively portrait (e-g), it is observed a little closer, for the first time, the lofty ridges of the Piatra Craiului Mountains, which support a relatively poorly developed vegetation, specific to the alpine regime, where only endemic and endangered species of flora are found. The vertical walls, as well as the snow-capped peaks, are also repeated in Fig. 5. In some places, the tourist activity was also captured (through the sight of travel or camping at the base of the slopes), thus emphasizing the idea that the area has potential for the development of mountain tourism.

To complete and fully outline the considered area, a series of maximum postcards are also reproduced. Thus, in Fig. 6a, is reproduced the maximum postcard made between 25-26.09.1982, at the Symposium „Man and nature face in front”, bearing the day stamp (25.09.1982) of the Transit Postal Office from Brașov [49], respectively the maximum obliterated with the special stamp „European Year of Nature Protection”, at the Vatra Dornei Postal Office, somewhere around 1995 (in Fig. 6b) [50].

Along with the two postcards that come to present species from the local flora, a series of stationery covers were also identified (see Fig. 7) [51,52]. They are limited to presenting in their semi-illustration only a view of the area, without facilitating access to other relevant information. In both the uncirculated and the circulated version, the pieces from Fig. 7 did not enjoy a great turnout among the public.

Given the impressive number of illustrated postcards, some even made in the form of maxims, it should be mentioned that these are practically the only philatelic records that have as a landmark the area of Piatra Craiului National Park. Until this time, at the end of 2020, no pieces have been identified, in the form of postage stamps or envelopes on the first day of the show, to be addressed to the interested public. The thematic philately in Romania still has



(a) View towards Piatra Craiului mountains, from Postăvaru cottage



(b) View towards Piatra Craiului mountains



(c) View towards Piatra Craiului mountains, near the Postăvaru cottage



(d) View towards Piatra Craiului mountains



(e) Piatra Craiului mountains - view from their base



(f) Piatra Craiului - Rudărița canton (view of the local forest industry)

Fig. 2. Illustrated postcards under the title „View to Piatra Craiului”



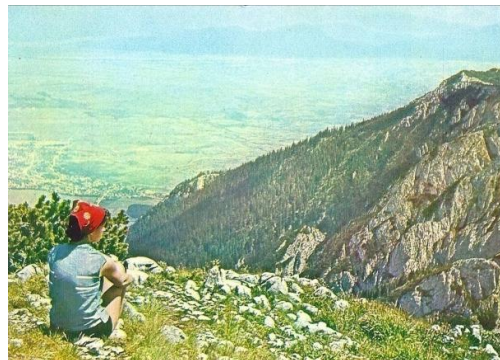
(a) Piatra Craiului peak - view from Zărnești main street



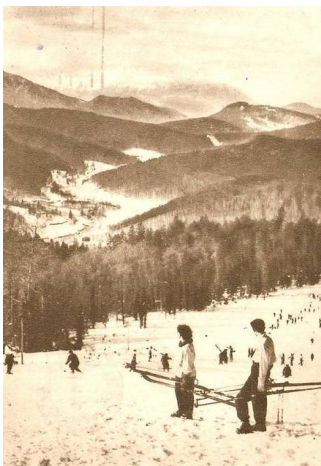
(b) Piatra Craiului mountains - view from their base



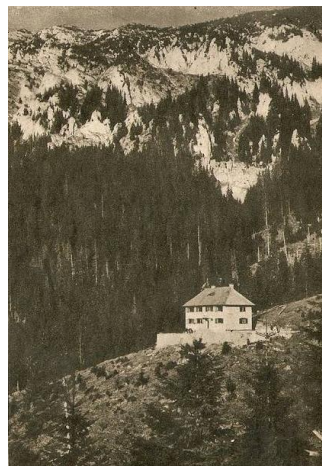
(c) Piatra Craiului - view towards Ivan's Valley (Argeș county)



(d) View from the Piatra Craiului plateau



(e) Bucegi mountains, Predeal-Ciăbucet, view to Piatra Craiului mountains

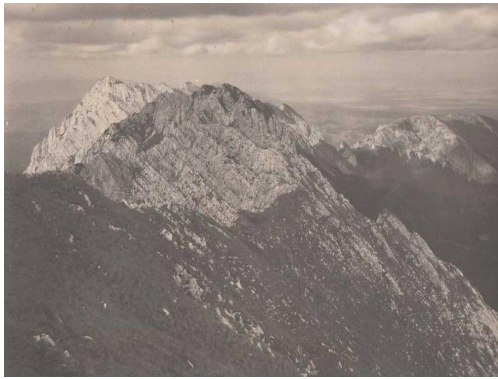


(f) Curmătura Cottage, near to Piatra Craiului mountains



(g) Piatra Craiului mountains, area-specific outcrops

Fig. 3. Other illustrated postcards under the title „View to Piatra Craiului”



(a) Piatra Craiului mountains, view from the top of the mountain range



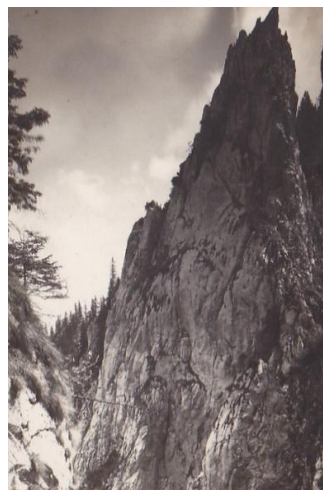
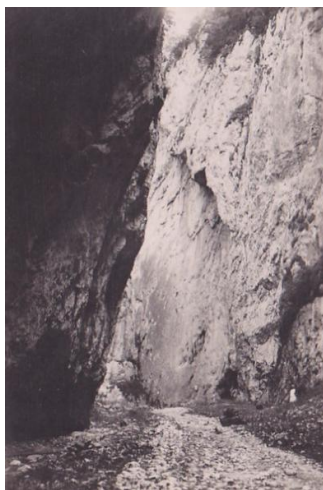
(b) Piatra Craiului mountains, view from the top of the mountain range



(c) Piatra Craiului mountains, view from the top of the mountain range



(d) Piatra Craiului mountains, view from the top of the mountain range



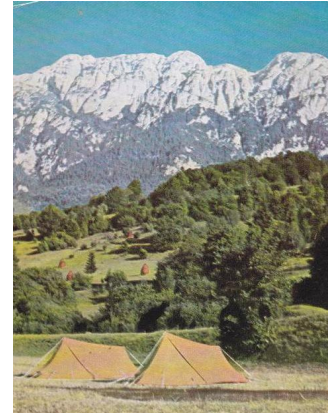
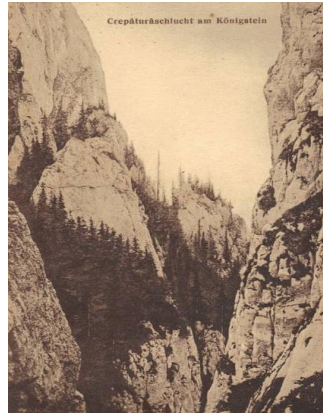
(e)-(g) Piatra Craiului mountains, view of the vertical walls

Fig. 4. Illustrated postcards entitled „Piatra Craiului Mountains”



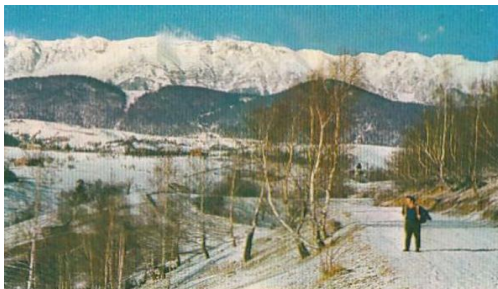


(a)-(b) Piatra Craiului mountains, views of the northern ridge

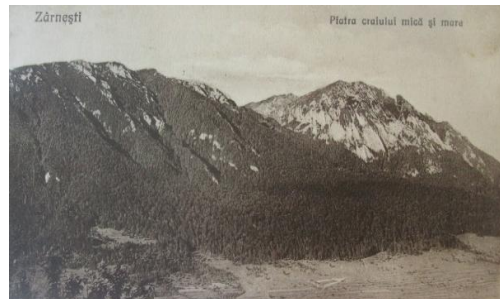


(c)-(d) Piatra Craiului mountains - Crăpătura Valley

(e) At the feet of the Piatra Craiului mountains



(f)-(g) Piatra Craiului mountains, view of the snow-capped peaks



(h)-(i) Piatra Craiului mountains, view of the peaks full of vegetation

Fig. 5. Other illustrated postcards entitled „Piatra Craiului Mountains”



(a) *Dianthus callizonus*, endemic species of the Piatra Craiului area

(b) Piatra Craiului mountains, view of the peaks full of *Abies alba* forests

Fig. 6. Maximum postcards under the title „Piatra Craiului Mountains”



(a) Piatra Craiului mountains, view of the snow-capped peaks

(b) Piatra Craiului mountains, view of the Prince's Rocks

Fig. 7. Stationery covers under the title „Piatra Craiului - view”

work to do in this regard. However, we are confident that the situation will change, and that emphasis will be placed on promoting protected areas through philately, which from the outset has the status of ambassador in promoting the natural heritage.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In the paper, we bring to the fore the area of Piatra Craiului National Park, both from an ecological point of view - by presenting the species of flora and fauna living in that area in the form of a short inventory, and philatelic point of view - by analyzing, describing and disseminating the pieces identified in within philatelic content e-commerce sites.

We were also deeply impressed by the multitude of illustrated postcards, which come in response to thematic philately in promoting the intrinsic values of the area. Although there have been no philatelic issues dedicated exclusively to Piatra Craiului National Park, such as in the case of

Caehlau National Park, Retezat National Park, or even the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, there has been no negative impact on tourism or area management.

As a result of our research, we were able to identify and analyze the most diverse pieces that were the basis for promoting the area. Marketing through philately (illustrated postcards) inevitably led to the development of the local tourist activity, and in a lesser way to the conservation of the area. Under these conditions, the local intrinsic values of the area (in the form of various habitats, landforms, and spaces intended exclusively for tourism - tourist refuges, mountain trails, ski resorts, etc.) were reproduced and brought back to the memory of the community, as well as for the attention of future visitors.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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