

Basic information on living nature of the Upland

Beside impressive volcanic relief, the Cerová vrchovina Upland is remarkable also by the occurrence of rare and endangered flora and fauna.

The forest covers approximately 2/3 of the Upland area. In the lowermost position, the oak tier of vegetation extends. The assemblage of the hornbeam – oak woods (Carpineto – Quercetum) occupies this area, trees like *Quercus petraea* (sessile oak), *Quercus cerris* (turkey oak), *Carpinus betulus* (hornbeam), *Robinia pseudoacacia* (locust) are growing here. In the scrub underbrush *Corylus avellana* (hazel), *Crataegus* sp. (hawthorn) and *Cornus mas* (cornel) occur. The dogwood – oak assemblage (Corneto – Quercetum) occurs in the small enclaves only. It is growing on the dry, stony slopes of the forest-steppe character, with following woods: *Quercus pubescens* (pubescent oak), *Quercus petraea* (sessile oak), *Acer campestre* (field maple); and scrubs: *Cornus mas* (cornel), *Ligustrum vulgare* (privet), *Robinia pseudoacacia* (locust). In underbrush of the oak tier forest, *Lychnis coronaria*, *Scilla bifolia*, *Anthericum ramosum* and *Colutea arborescens* grow.

Forests of the beech-oaken tier cover the largest areas of the Upland territory, especially the slopes of different inclination and exposition. The beech-oak assemblage (Fageto – Quercetum) consists of the *Fagus sylvatica* (beech), *Quercus petraea* (sessile oak), *Quercus cerris* (turkey oak), *Carpinus betulus* (hornbeam), *Acer platanoides* (Norway maple) and scrubs: *Ligustrum vulgare* (privet), *Crataegus* sp. (hawthorn) and *Corylus avellana* (hazel). In herb underbrush there are protected species of the family Orchidaceae (orchids).

Forests of the oak-beech tier encroach the highest parts of the Upland, but they also cover lower parts of the colder, northward exposed slopes.

In the oak-beech assemblage (Querceto-Fagetum), the *Fagus sylvatica* (beech) prevails over the *Quercus petraea* (sessile oak), *Tilia* sp. (linden), *Cerasus avium* (sweet cherry), *Acer platanoides* (Norway maple) and *Carpinus betulus* (hornbeam).

The beech woods (Fagetum pauper) grow in the cold ravines, around the altitude 500 m. The beech tier is of isolated occurrence. It is an assemblage of typical beech woods (Fagetum typicum) on the cold and humid slopes and foothills. The beech prevails, the oak and maple occur only sporadically.

In forests of the Cerová vrchovina Upland, besides roe deer, wild boar, red deer and artificially introduced mouflon, there live also carnivores, e.g. *Vulpes vulpes* (fox), *Felis silvestris* (wild cat), *Meles meles* (badger), *Martes martes* (marten). Forest environment is rich in birds.

The areas, deforested in the past, have been changed to grassland, meadows and fields. In more extreme positions, on the southern sunny and dry slopes, the assemblage of grass steppe and around the rocky cliffs the assemblage of forest steppe evolved. They are xerothermic assemblages with *Pulsatilla pratensis*, *Pulsatilla grandis*, *Iris pumila*, *Chrysopogon gryllus* and *Stipa* sp. In many cases, they represent genetic reserve areas. This is also a convenient biotope of the thermophilic insects and some of the internationally protected bird species are living here. In the shallow valleys, characteristic farms – „pustas“ with typical beam wells and specific country architecture have been situated. The environment together with many elements of human activity give the country a specific complexity full of unusual charm and uniqueness.