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**Role of Ecological Festivals in the
Conservation of Traditional
Knowledge on Bioresources**

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- **Environmental festival** (Ecological festival) is a holistic, polyfunctional, syncretic, public cultural and entertainment event, one objective of which is to present the totality of traditional knowledge, a set of values and norms and the livelihood patterns of people.
- In the traditional folk household of Belarusians, gathering of wild berries, fruits, mushrooms, as well as fodder, medicinal, ornamental, meadow grasses, tubers, tree girdling, making of vegetable juices, gathering honey of wild bees, and etc. have played an important role for a long time. Each of these activities require knowledge of the local environment, nutritional (feeding) and medicinal properties of various plants, the optimal timing of their gathering, initial processing methods, their conservation and use. Organizers of each ecological festival seek to identify, recover and integrate in today's sociocultural discourse a certain part of traditional knowledge, skills and abilities.

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- In our country, about 150 festivals are held annually and about a quarter of them are of an ecological direction.

Local environmental festivals, which are focused on the local community and aimed to preserve environmental heritage and mainstream traditional knowledge associated with the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are of particular interest for us. They have much in common in terms of their organization.

Within each of such festivals, presentations on environmental protection and nature conservation are made; homesteads are advertised, competitions between rural households are held, the collected gifts of nature or food produced by traditional methods are sold; master classes of folk craftsmen and experts of the Belarusian national cuisine are organized, including the exhibition and sale of their products, intellectual games, sporting tournaments, children's play programs, stage shows, parades and concerts.

- At the same time, the content of ecological festivals differs greatly.

Thus, the hallmark of the Environmental festival “**Žuravli i Žuraviny of Mijorski Krai**” (Cranes and Cranberry of Myory District), Vitebsk Region, are the cranes, thousands of which settle in Yelnya for a short time when migrating. It is a lake-marsh complex with rare species of plants, animals and cranberry. Thus, the holiday programme includes the observation of cranes, a competition for the best cranberry deliverer, a competition among the trade union organizations of labor collectives of the District for cranberry gathering – “**Smak of Žuraviny**” (Taste of Cranberry), the award of winners among cranberry gatherers, fresh cranberry sale. Farmsteads always offer local sweets, gifts of nature, especially cranberry and products from them.

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- Also, a village of Olmany (Stolin District, Brest Region), the local residents of which have been gathering useful berries in Olmanskiye marshes since ancient times, organizes a festivity in honor of cranberry. A festive programme includes the choreographic composition "I am gathering cranberries" and a theatrical procession with masked characters – Lady (Mistress) of Marshes, Cranberry King and Queen, Olman and Olmanka welcoming Olman residents and festival guests.

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- The peculiarity of this festival is its preparatory stage related to the research and study of local methods and tools for cranberry gathering, their storage and processing, the whole complex of do's and don'ts, a set of rules of conduct related the pragmatic and ritualized character of a person in situations associated with a visit to the forest area and forest utilization.

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- Svisloch District, Grodno Region, held a regional Environmental festival “Belarusian pristine forests are clattering ...”, a tradition which dates back to 2004, the year when the first in the country celebration of forest was held by the Svisloch River. Almost half of the District’s territory is occupied by forests, in its south-west mostly, where a third part of the largest pristine forest of the country is located – the National Park “Belovezhskaya Pushcha”, a unique monument of nature and not only in Belarus, but also throughout Europe.
- The 1st Scientific and Practical Regional Environmental Conference "Role of Belovezhskaya Pushcha in the Conservation of Biodiversity" was held during the last festival, and on the occasion of the festival, an alley was laid. Festival sites are constantly operating, e.g. “Hascinnaja Lesničouška”, where you can find by-use goods – brooms, banya (sauna) whisks, etc.; forest “gifts” – cowberry, cranberry, honey collected from forbs, and ornamental shrub seedlings.

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- In the Sporovsky Reserve (Bereza District, Brest Region), the Ecological festival “Sporovskiye Haymakers’ is held, during which the national hand-haymaking championship and swamp football (football in the swamp) take place.

At this festival, both national professional and practical experience and related knowledge are actualized.

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- In Shklov, Mogilev Region, a holiday dedicated to summer crop harvesting – Cucumber Festival during which you can learn about local recipes for cooking and brining of cucumbers and other vegetables – has been celebrated for the last ten years.

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- ❑ An Ethnocultural Festival “Poklich of Paliessie” (Call of Paliessie), held every two years in the National Park “Pripyat”, makes a significant contribution to the revival of traditional knowledge.
- ❑ Guests learn about a unique culture of Belarusian Paliessie. There are also fishermen competitions and racing down the river in traditional Paliessie boats –chaŭny.

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- In the village Krynica (Pruzhanj District, Brest Region), a Mushroom Festival “Krynica – gryboŭ stalica” (Krynica – a capital of mushrooms) is regularly held, at which a competition between mushroom pickers “Za grybnym ŧčasem” (for mushroom happiness) and a competition for the best mushroom dish “Usje smaki lesu ũ krynickich delikatesach”(All forest flavors in Krynica culinary delights) take place – an effective data transmission channel in the area of traditional gathering. It should be noted that in the past gathering of forest gifts was accompanied by numerous superstitions and superstitious beliefs.
- Successful gathering was often understood in the folk view of life (folk world perception) as a kind of “happiness” and well-known mushroom and berry places acquired the name of “happy place”, “happy glade”. And today field studies fix a belief in special mushroom (berry) “happiness”, the need to thank for the good mushroom (berry) place.



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Роля экалагічных фестываляў у захаванні традыцыйных ведаў па біярэсурсах

- ❑ Popular festivals include honey ones accompanied by acquaintance with the traditional tools and methods of honey gathering.
- ❑ Thus, an International Cultural and Recreational Festival “U hascjach u pčolki” (Visiting a Bee) takes place in different places of Belarus, where you can buy an ecofriendly product made of natural herbs. Apart from honey, visitors get balsams useful for the organism, medicinal plants for various diseases and teas.

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- A Potato Festival is also hosted in different settlements of Belarus and new potato varieties are advertised at it. A competition for the best potato grower (breeder) and an exhibition of products and souvenirs from raw potatoes are held. But traditional local culinary knowledge is used most of all during the preparation of various potato dishes, which are also assessed by the jury.

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- ❑ This also includes a Cheese Festival “Haspadarčy Syr” (Domestic (home-made) Cheese) in Slawharad (Slavgorod), Mogilev Region, which preserves and restores folk cheese making traditions.
- ❑ During the annual festival usually held in the late spring, you can taste and buy dozens of home-made cheese varieties – cream and curd, soft and hard, with dill, garlic, and cumin, as well as syrnytza (a cheese product) from the stove, etc. Master classes, topic-related competitions and an exhibition of traditional tools are held.

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Thank you for your attention!

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