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## **ECOLOGICAL TRAIL "THE CHORNOBYL EXCLUSION ZONE"**

Due to the deteriorating environmental situation in the country, accompanied by environmental pollution, irrational use of natural resources and reduced biodiversity, many problematic issues regarding the formation of relations between man and nature have come on. The issue of public ecological consciousness is related to the environmental education and culture of an individual, regardless of age, education and social status. The creation of ecological trails is a perspective direction for raising and developing the ecological consciousness of the population. The development of ecological trails is one of the forms to increase ecological thinking and worldview. Ecological trail is a cognitive tourist trail, which is equipped and contains specially protected walking and cognitive routes created for the purpose of ecological education of the population.

Studying the discipline "Nature Reserves Management" at higher education establishments, students considered the possibility of creating ecological trails for ecological education of younger generation. Thus, students were offered the option of creating an ecological trail within the Chernobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve. Researchers noted that a few years after the Chernobyl accident, the gradual restoration of fauna and flora in the area of radioactive contamination occurred: favorable conditions for this were the evacuation of the population and the cessation of economic activity. The researchers' forecast for the future was favorable, i.e., a slow transformation of anthropogenic landscapes into Polissya natural complexes was expected. The purpose of creating such an ecological trail is the information and educational knowledge dissemination. It is important to understand the values of biological and landscape diversity, to form environmental awareness and culture, as well respect for nature. The Exclusion Zone and the Zone of Unconditional (Mandatory) Resettlement are the unique part of the most typical natural complexes of Polissya, which need to be preserved in their natural state under constant ecological monitoring of the environment.

The ecological trail "The Chernobyl Exclusion Zone" is located in the Ivanivskiy district of Kyiv Oblast, twenty-three kilometers north of Chernobyl, in the city of Pripyat and its environs, on the territory of the State Environmental Agency for Exclusion Zone Management. The ecological trail is designed for schoolchildren, teachers, vacationers, organized tour groups, etc. The ecological trail is visited in an organized way under the guidance of a guide and an inspector of the State Environmental Protection Agency. The total length of the trail is 13 km 700 meters lasting up to 4 hours. The route along the trail is carried out both by car and on foot. There are 6 view stops on the route, where the guide will acquaint you with the uniqueness of these places, flora and fauna. During the ecological trail it is forbidden to: deviate from the route, touch buildings, trees, plants, eat, drink, smoke outdoors, drink alcohol, sit on the ground, put personal belongings on the ground, take out any items, leave pictures, inscriptions.

Stop 1 - "Pond with catfish". Ecological trail passes near the pond with catfish. The artificial reservoir was intended for cooling heated water in the reactors of Chernobyl power station. For the rational use of the reservoir, fish were bred in it, and now, despite the high level of radiation, many fish live in it. After the nuclear accidents, when people left the radiation-affected areas, nature quickly began to recover.

Here you can meet the largest freshwater predator - catfish. Usually these huge fish are hidden at the bottom of rivers, and in the cooling channel of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant they can be not only seen but also fed. This fish should not be caught or eaten, as it accumulates radioactive substances.

Stop 2 - "Chernobyl Bridge of Death". The usual pedestrian bridge that connected the city with the Chernobyl nuclear power plant was called the "bridge of death". During the Chernobyl accident, this bridge was covered by a radioactive cloud, the radiation background reached 600 R/h. There was a legend among the population that a person who crossed this bridge died a few days later. This is usually a fiction, but such a negative name has become attached to this bridge.

Stop 3 - "Red Forest". Pine forest, which was located in close proximity to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Pine plantations were strongly affected by radiation, thus needles turned a brick color, and all the forest turned into "red" or "rusty". Due to a possible secondary source of radioactive contamination, part of this forest was buried underground. Eventually, the ecosystem began to recover and young pines began to grow in this place.

Stop 4 - Secret radar station "Arc" (Chernobyl 2). The most famous monument of the Chernobyl zone is the DUGA-1 radar station. The station was designed to track the launch of missiles from the United States during the Cold War, and the 1st and 2nd nuclear power units were to supply electricity directly to the station. There were three such complexes in the Soviet Union. The first two radar antennas have long since ceased to exist, but the Chernobyl one has survived. For a long time the object was classified. However, today it is one of the favorite places to visit and take pictures.

Stop 5 - "Amusement Park in Prypiat". The opening of the park was scheduled for May 1, 1986, but due to the disaster it was not destined to receive guests. The symbol of both Prypiat and the entire Chernobyl zone was the Ferris wheel, on which no one rode. Dilapidated swings and abandoned alleys emphasize the contrast between past and present.

Stop 6 - "Cemetery of barges and ships". The Gulf of Prypiat - the Chernobyl Bay - was used to repair ships at a local shipyard. As a result of the accident at the NPP, all ships that were exposed to radiation during the transportation of goods had to be placed in a settling tank. It was this quiet creek that was chosen as their last resting place. Yes, this is where the cemetery of barges and ships appeared.

Ecological education and upbringing of the population is possible only if the content of ecological disciplines becomes the basis for the development of ecologically oriented values that will help to realize the value of nature to meet the material, cognitive, cultural, aesthetic and spiritual needs of human; to understand that human is a part of nature.