

Brief Abstract

Argentina has a long history in connection with the protection of the natural heritage, but the most specific concept of geological heritage is, in some aspects, fairly new. Currently, this idea has arisen in the local scenario – or it could be said to have re-emerged- following new world trends and at the same time considering other Latin American works and projects. During the last years, this fact has promoted both interest and concern about the preservation of this heritage.

Today, activities and initiatives related to the geological heritage – or some of its modalities- are in full growth. Several of these actions are channeled through Investigation Institutes, Universities, Town Halls, Government Agencies, tourism entities, NGOs, private entities, among others. One of the strategies to preserve and value the geological heritage in Argentina is the existence of geological parks (mainly of paleontological interest but also geological and mining interests) which have clear preservation, education and sustainable development objectives.

There are many professionals and institutions linked and interested in the development of this issue, and the trend is increasing. However, even though there are many individual efforts, some aspects need to be dealt by a work group, particularly those related to inventory. What follows is a list of some advances and highlights of the year 2016. These advances are considered to have brought both growth and continuity to the theme of Geological Heritage, Geoparks and Geotourism in the country.

2016 Activities

Part of the scientific community in our country presents an increasing interest in the theme of Geological Heritage, Geoparks and Geotourism. This fact is evidenced in the inclusion of this topic not only in local meetings but also in all the editions of the Argentine Geological Congress since 2002. In relation to this, the call for the presentation of works in the upcoming Congress, to be held in August 2017, has already been issued in the “Geological Heritage, Geoparks, Sustainable Development and Healthy Lifestyles” Symposium.

Organized by the Universidad de Mar del Plata (Mar del Plata University), the first postgraduate course on “Geoparks and their role in the protection of the geo, bio and paleodiversity” took place in November 2015.

Though still considered low, the number of undergraduate theses on topics such as geoconservation and tourism development has increased since 2014 in course of studies as Geological Sciences, Geography and Tourism.

Since activities and courses associated with science communication are presenting a remarkable development in official institutions, there has been a rise not only in the number but also in the quality of the products linked to scientific disclosure due to the fact that they appear to be important for the appropriation of knowledge of citizens in relation to their environment.

Currently, the formal creation of an area of Geological Heritage is being studied considering the eventual structural reform of the Servicio Geológico Minero Argentino (Argentine Mining and Geological Survey), a national scientific-technical organism in charge of the geological and thematic survey of all the territory of the country. These days, issues related to these topics continue being developed through the Comisión de Sitios de Interés Geológico de la República Argentina (Commission of Sites of Geological Interest in Argentina).

Argentina has taken part in publications linked to Geological Heritage and its Conservation in Latin America, presented in 7th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks 2016 – English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark.

There has been an upgrowth in the total territory under the regime of protected areas, not only of national but also provincial jurisdiction. In 2014 the protected areas reached a total of 29.976.135 hectares, while in 2015 this number turned into 33.522.287 hectares, information provided by the Sistema Federal de Áreas Protegidas- SIFAP (Federal System of Protected Areas). On December 21, the creation of the future Aconquija National Park was announced. This park will provide protection for more than 50 thousand hectares in the ranges of Aconquija, which is an important area for the conservation of the Yungas ecoregion, in the Tucumán Province. Its natural resources and biodiversity are complementary to the development of local communities to ensure life quality and the sustainability of the historic productive activities of the piedmont of Tucumán.

To date, the IGCP National Committee, understood as such by the Argentine Geological Association, has not officially received an application or communication linked to the creation of Geoparks in Argentina.