Prehistory of Man in the Prądnik Valley and Ojcow

Many traces indicating the habitation of these areas by prehistoric people have been discovered in the Ojcowski National Park. Traces of their presence were found in caves providing them with shelter and offering good opportunities for defense against potential enemies. The oldest traces, dating back to 120-115 thousand years BC, were found in the Dark Cave. They belong to the Azilian culture from the end of the Middle Polish Glaciation. However, the richest archaeological material concerns five cultures living between 70-54 thousand years BC in the Koziarna, Dark, and Wylotne shelters. These were tribes consisting of about 20 people, leading a nomadic way of life and mainly engaging in hunting. They hunted with spears and bolas for animals living here at that time, such as mammoths, aurochs, reindeer, and cave bears.

Prehistoric humans used flint to make tools. Numerous flint tools were discovered in the Bat Cave, fewer in the Mammoth Cave, Koziarnia, and the Puchacz Rock shelter. During the research, it was established that they date back to 36 thousand years BC and were produced by people belonging to the Jerzmanowice culture.

In the Maszycka Cave, evidence of cannibalism practiced by people from the Magdalenian culture from 13-12 thousand years BC was discovered. A substantial collection of decorated flint tools was also found there.

In the vicinity of Smardzowice, few microliths, i.e., very small flint tools, dating back to the older Stone Age (8-5.5 thousand years BC) were found. A large number of findings come from the younger Stone Age (5.5-2.2 thousand years BC), when the areas of the Ojcowski National Park and its surroundings were inhabited by people from various cultures: ribbon pottery, incised, Lengyel, Baden, and funnel beaker cultures. Numerous flint mines, flint tools, worked animal bones, pottery fragments, and decorations were discovered in these areas.

During the Bronze and Iron Ages, few tribes inhabited the Ojcowski National Park area because the conditions there were not conducive to agricultural development.