# *HYDRONYMS IN THE OLT RIVER BASIN WHICH ARE DERIVED FROM APPELLATIVES REFERRING TO FAUNA*

**Adriana Elena GEANTĂ***

***Abstract***: *This paper presents a structural analysis of the Olt River Basin hydronyms that are derived from common nouns referring to fauna, given the fact that both geographers and linguists have long accepted that the names of animals, birds and insects, which live in a region, transferred their names to the names of places and rivers that pass through those places.*

***Keywords***: *hydronym, common nouns/appellatives, fauna, toponyms/place names*.

Hydronyms are considered the most resistant and the oldest toponyms, and they form a first stratum in toponymy, i.e. the hydronymic stratum. Conducting research of the hydronymy of a region requires not only a thorough analysis of rivers and lakes, but also of the names that refer to the concept of *water* in general.

From the semantic standpoint, i.e. in terms of the object designated, hydronyms, meaning also those in the Olt River Basin, can be classified, according to Viorica Florea, into:

- *Hydronyms rooted in the geographical aspects of the places in question, concerning the flora, fauna, various aspects of the terrain, the water beds and banks;*
- *Hydronyms indicating various features of water courses;*
- *Hydronyms coming from place names;*
- *Hydronyms which, by their content, express social and historical realities;*
- *Hydronyms formed from anthroponyms*. (Florea Viorica, 1975: 69-76)

In this article are discussed the hydronyms in the Olt River basin, which are formed from appellations referring to fauna. It is generally admitted that these also may come from names of animals, in addition to the names of people. Therefore, it is rather difficult to determine their origin, and the time of their entering toponymy is the most important. In the literature denomination is considered to be derived from the animal's name, especially in the mountainous areas or at the foothills of the Carpathians.

In general, hydronyms formed with the collective suffix *-oaia*, *-ar*, *-are* come from animal names. Most certainly, the names of water courses passing through forests must be associated with the names of the animals living there.

On the other hand, the hydronyms that are based on animal names are mostly to be found in a mountainous or hilly area, but they sometimes happen to be located in regions in the plains, where in ancient times there were forests, and of course animals.

The toponymic material that formed the basis of the present study comprises the 622 rivers, streams and brooks making up the Olt River basin, as recorded in the Atlas of the Water Courses Cadastre of Romania.

For each water course name analysed, we considered the geographical features concerning their location, length, tributaries and towns or villages crossed, the attestation of the names, as well as a number of linguistic remarks concerning the typology, genesis and etymology of the respective place name.

CIOCÂRLIA (*the lark*) is a tributary of the River Moldoveanu, located in the lower basin of the Olt River and it is 8 km long. The origin of the name is, in this case,

* University of Pitești, adrianageanta@yahoo.com



BDD-A5968 © 2013 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.90 (2026-09-16 06:09:14 UTC)

the proper name *Lark*, formed by conversion from the appellative *lark*. Actually, the water name may come from the name of the bird, but also from the entopic *cioc* (*beak*), meaning mound, a higher hill or hillock, high and sharp hilltop, hill edge.

COCOŞ(U)[1] is a tributary of the Aita river, which is located in the upper basin of the Olt River, in Covasna county, and it is 11 km long.

As far as COCOŞ(U)[2] is concerned, there is a pond or pool of the same name, in the village of Frâncești, in Vâlcea county. The name was formed through onymization, from the proper name *Cocoşu* (*cook*/*rooster*), although we must also consider the possibility of the name coming from the homophonous entopic *cocoş*, meaning a high peak that is thinner in the middle.

CORBOAICA is not listed in the Water Cadastre. It is a stream running through the village Mirla, part of Bobicesti, in the county of Olt. The name comes from the toponym *Corboaica* < *corb* (*raven*) + suffix *-oaica*.

DRACU(L) is located in the upper basin of the Olt River, and is 7 km long, and a tributary of the River Tărlung, in Brasov county. The name comes, by metaphorical transfer, from the anthroponym *Dracul* < appellative *drac* (*devil/dragon*).

IZVORUL VACII (Cow's Spring) is located in the middle basin of the Olt River, its length is 5 km, and, along a certain portion, its name is also Clăbucet. The toponym is formed by polarization, based on composition from the entopic *izvor* (*spring*) + noun determiner in the genitive, referring to the name of the animal in question.

LUPA is a stream located in the middle basin of the Olt River, passing through the villages Bengeşti, Albeni, Bolbocești, Mirosloveni, and Bârzeiu de Gilort. The term comes from the name of the animal, the *wolf* + the feminine ending *-a*. Yet it may also come from a person's name, as we tried to show at the beginning of this section: hydronyms originating in names of animals, most likely come from those very names, because where there is a forest next to a water course there are also animals from the names of which names of water courses may arise directly.

PÂRÂUL CAILOR (the horses' brook) is located in the upper basin of the Olt River and is 6 km long. It is formed by onymization based on metonymy with the entopic *pârâu* (*stream/brook*) + noun determiner in the genitive, referring to the name of the animal in question.

PÂRÂUL CÂINELUI (the dog's brook) is located in the lower basin of the Olt River and is 11 km long. The name is formed by onymization based on metonymy with the entopic *pârâu* (*stream/brook*) + noun determiner in the genitive, referring to the name of the animal in question; the name is attested as early as 1864 (Szathmary).

PÂRÂUL URŞILOR (the bears' brook) is located in the upper basin of the Olt River and is 8 km long. The name is formed by onymization based on metonymy with the entopic *pârâu* (*stream/brook*) + noun determiner in the genitive, referring to the name of the animal in question.

PORUMBACU[1] is a 27 km long river, located in the middle basin of the Olt River, upstream of the confluence with Porumbăcel (or Pârâul Mare "Big Creek").

PORUMBACU[2] is 80 km long, and is located in the middle basin of the river Olt. Its left-side tributary is Lişcov, and its right-side tributary is Şerbota. It runs through the villages of Porumbacu de Sus and Porumbacu de Jos, in Sibiu County.

As far as etymology is concerned, what we can demonstrate is that the term may have been derived by onymization based on conversion from either the appellative *porumbac* "fluture mare de noapte, cu aripile din faţă galbene cu dungi cafenii şi cu cele din spate multicolore" ("big night moth with yellow striped front wings and



BDD-A5968 © 2013 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.90 (2026-09-16 06:09:14 UTC)

multicoloured rear wings") (DLRM, 1958: 645.), the homonymous appellative naming birds with mottled feathers, or the appellative *porumb* (a variant is *porumbel*) < Lat. *palumbus* + suffix *-ac*.

PORUMBĂCEL (or RÂUL MARE "Big River") is located in the middle basin of the Olt River, is 13 km long and runs downstream of Porumbac. The name comes from the appellative *porumbac* + diminutive suffix *-el*.

RACU is a brook whose name is listed in the Water Course Cadastre in its plus-article form (*Racul*). It is located in the upper basin of the Olt River, in the Harhita county, and is 17 km long. Its left-side tributary is Frumoasa; it runs through the following villages: Livezi, Nădejdea, Mihăileni, Văcăreşti. The name comes from the onymization of the appelative *rac* (*crayfish*), but it can also mean "a dam along the bank of a river so that it does not overflow" ("*întăritură la malul unei ape pentru ca aceasta să nu se reverse*").

RAŢA is located in the upper basin of the Olt River, and is 9 km long; a certain portion of it is called *Pârâul Periculos* (Dangerous stream). The name of the river is derived, through metonymy-based onymization, from the appellative *raţa* "duck".

ŞOARECUL is located in the upper basin of the Olt River, and is 12 km long; the main village it crosses is Dăneşti. The name comes from the appellative *şoarec* "mouse", and is very probably calqued on a Hungarian name (cf. oicon. Șoard).

ŞTIUCA is located in the upper basin of the Olt River, and is 6 km long. The name derives, through metonymy-based onymization, from the appellative *ştiuca* "pike".

URSANA is located in the lower basin of the Olt River and is 16 km long. The name may come from the group name Ursani, and also from the anthroponym Ursan, but most likely the name comes directly from the toponym Ursana, which probably denoted a forest where there were bears, and, through transfer, it shifted to the hydronym, as well.

VALEA CAPRELOR (goats' valley) is located in the middle basin of the Olt River and is 7 km long. The name is formed by metonymy-based onymization with the entopic *vale* "valley" + noun determiner in the genitive, referring to the name of the animal in question.

VALEA LUPULUI (Wolf Valley) is located in the middle basin of the Olt River, is 16 km long, and a certain portion of it is called Mărăjdia. The name is formed by metonymy-based onymization with the entopic *vale* "valley" + noun determiner in the genitive, referring to the name of the animal in question.

VALEA OII (Sheep Valley) is located in the lower basin of the Olt River, and is 11 km long; a certain portion of the river is called Cornăţel. The name is formed by metonymy-based onymization with the entopic *vale* "valley" + noun determiner in the genitive, referring to the name of the animal in question.

VIDRUŢA is located in the lower basin of the Olt River, a tributary of the River Lotru in Vâlcea county, and is 5 km long; it receives, as left-side tributaries, Pârâginosu, Mogoşeru and Pietrele Vidruţei, and flows into the Vidra dam lake. The name comes from the toponym *Vidra* + diminutive suffix *-uţa*, while *Vidra* itself comes from the metonymy-based onymization of the appellative *vidra* "otter".

The issue of name transfer in toponymy is extremely difficult, since in many cases there occur such shifts of the name from one object to another. Correctly solving toponymic transfer is only possible through knowledge of the local situation and careful analysis of the information provided by historical and linguistic sources.



BDD-A5968 © 2013 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.90 (2026-09-16 06:09:14 UTC)

In conclusion, we can say that hydronyms, whether simple or compound, are mostly derived on Romanian ground (since they were formed in the Romanian language), although some of the appellatives or anthroponyms from which they were derived are of foreign origin. Based on the study of the names of water courses in the Olt River basin, the old age and the spial role of hydronyms can be proved in the lives of people throughout the history of this land.

***References***

*Atlasul Cadastrului Apelor din România*, partea I, Ministerul Mediului, 1992
Bolocan, Gheorghe, Toma, Ion; Silvestru, Elena; Burci, Iustina, *Dicţionarul entopic al limbii române*, vol. I, II, Editura Universitaria, Craiova, 2009,2010
*Dicţionarul limbii române moderne*, Editura Academiei, Bucureşti, 1958
*Dicţionarul toponimic al României. Oltenia*, vol. I-VII, Editura Universitaria, Craiova
*Dicţionarul toponimic al României. Muntenia, vol. I-III*, Editura Academiei Române
Florea, Viorica, *Cum au luat naştere numele româneşti de ape*, în *Lucrările simpozionului de toponimie*, Bucureşti, 1975, p. 69-76
Iordan, Iorgu, *Toponimia românească*, Editura Academiei, Bucureşti, 1963
Stancu, Adela, *Nume de ape în Bazinul Jiului*, in SCO nr. 6, Editura Universitaria, Craiova, 2001
Toma, Ion, *Despre clasificarea numelor de locuri*, In *Anuar de lingvistică şi istorie literară*, XXIX, 1983-1984, A, p. 321-325.



**BDD-A5968 © 2013 Universitatea din Pitești**
**Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.14.90 (2026-09-16 06:09:14 UTC)**