



LIFE MONTI DELLA TOLFA - Urgent nature conservation measures in the SPAs and SCIs of the area Tolfetano-Cerite-Manziate

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The LIFE Project Monti della Tolfa had as its main objective the restoration and preservation of some endangered habitats and species (mainly rarer birds). The initiative was also aimed at fostering a harmonious link between human activities and nature conservation, by favoring the traditional practices necessary to preserve the ecosystem of the area, as well as increasing awareness of residents and visitors on the importance of biodiversity and environmental heritage of the area also from the economic point of view. The Tolfa Mountains are a major natural area of great importance, 50 km from Rome, with biodiversity values among the highest in central Italy, characterized by pastures and Mediterranean forests. There are many environmental protection problems in the area. One of the most important is the slow transformation of open pastures in bushy areas taking to the reduction of the hunting areas of birds of prey and of the ecological niches useful to many species of passerines included in the Birds Directive (79/409 / EEC). In some forests, however, there has been a collapse of the forest formations due to climate change, which has threatened habitats not only of many bird species, but also of insects, amphibians and mammals. Other areas have been subjected to excessive pressure caused by cattle that, free to move, degraded pasture in the most favorable areas. An abandoned industrial site containing polluting drums constituted an additional threat to the healthiness of the area.

In addition, the poor knowledge on nature, both among many citizens and visitors, risked to jeopardize nature conservation in the area where traditional practices persisted for centuries ensuring the conservation of biodiversity. The project interested different areas of the following sites:

- SPA IT6030005 “Comprensorio Tolfetano Cerite-Manziate” preserving a rich community of bird species nesting and wintering in this area;
- SCI IT6030003 “Mesophilic Wood of Allumiere”;
- SCI IT6030008 “Macchia Grande di Manziana”;
- SCI IT6030001 “Middle course of the River Mignone”.

The actions in the SPA were aimed at improving the habitats of birds of prey (red kite, black kite, short-toed eagle, honey buzzard, peregrin falcon, nightjar, stone-curlew, European roller) and of passerines in open spaces (calandra-lark, short-toed lark, woodlark, tawny pipit, grey shrike, lesser grey shrike). The interventions in the SCI “Macchia Grande di Manziana” have concerned the habitat 91MO “Pannonic-Balkan turkey oak-sessile oak forests”, while in the SCI “Mesophilic Wood of Allumiere” interventions have been performed in the priority habitat 9210 “Appenine beech forests with *Taxus* and *Ilex*”.

PROJECT PHASES

The project permitted to carry out significant concrete conservation actions on the ground which combined protection of habitats of bird species with the preservation of traditional activities which over time, have shaped the natural surroundings, representing, as a whole, a management model of the interested areas.

In particular the following main interventions were performed:

- nature management of mature forests in 4 areas (Monteianni, Freddara, Quartaccio, Monte Angiano) for a total of 74 hectares in the territories of the Allumiere, Tolfa and Canale Monterano municipalities, involving the transformation of mature coppice woods in a compound coppice regimen (deciduous high forest above coppice) in order to combine the ecological and environmental functions of the forest with the reproductive needs of the bird species. In the forest/SCI “Macchia Grande di Manziana” clearings of 300-700 square meters have been done in two areas of 20 hectares in order to encourage the regeneration of the trees. Pruning, pasture control and support for forest renewal processes have been included;
- grasslands management and conservation with the twofold aim of avoiding overpressure caused by cattle freely moving in the degraded areas and stopping the progressive expansion of bushes in open spaces with the consequent decrease of bird species feeding in the meadows. In the territories of Manziana, Tolfa and Allumiere about 150 hectares of pastures have been cleared. The grazing areas were fenced with traditional fences “Tolfetane” used in the area (chestnut poles and barbed wire). Maintenance and construction of fountains, reconstruction of dry stone walls and restoration of rural roads have also been started;
- establishment of two temporary nurseries planting seeds of native tree species, resulting in a total of about 8.500 seedlings for future forestation activities;
- improvement of the usability and visibility of the sites through requalification interventions. Elaboration of itineraries, packages for nature tourism and creation of information points. In the whole area about 45 km of “LIFE trails” have been traced and mapped, crossing the most characteristic areas of the SPA and SCIs. One of the most significant actions was the reclamation of the mining site “Solfatara di Manziana-SOTEMI” located in the SCI “Macchia Grande di Manziana”. In the Regional Nature Reserve of Monterano a feeding platform for birds of prey has been built with a birdwatching hut and a fountain with pools for amphibians has been restored for educational purposes;
- monitoring activities on habitats and fauna of Community interest subject of the conservation actions, with the aim of controlling eventual changes in the status of raptor populations (red kite, short-toed eagle) and other bird species (stone-curlew and European roller) but even insects of Community interest (such as *Rosalia alpina*) and, more generally, the health of the environment (forests, pastures and arable land) where the interventions were carried out. The monitoring lasted four years;
- communication and awareness-raising activities aimed at the sustainable use of the territory, in particular: realization of educational plans for schools, nature trails and tourist packages.

PROJECT RESULTS

The innovative and demonstrative value of the project lies in several aspects. Firstly in [enhancing eco-tourism](#) that demonstrates how it is possible, even outside the parks, to coordinate efforts of public authorities at various levels to protect nature by creating a wide range of activities, products and services.

The LIFE-MONTI DELLA TOLFA project has been an important initiative for the management of the involved Natura 2000 sites, contributing significantly to reducing the threats to habitats and target species and to revaluing those traditional practices which are essential for the maintenance of semi natural environments. At the end of the project activities an increase in the number of bird couples of target species was recorded. Peregrin, stone-curlew and woodlark were those that showed more pronounced variations.

The main project results were as follows:

- recovery of about 96 hectares of forest habitats (22 woods have been converted to high forests and 54 to a compound coppice regimen) and 146 hectares of pastures for nesting and living of birds of Community interest;
- restoration of 34.700 linear mt of rural roads and 3.830 linear mt of dry stone walls;
- better management of pastures and of wild breeding with the creation of 10 sub-areas by the realization of 31.7 km of traditional fencing for a total of 3.383 ha, and the restoration of 22 fountains against the expected 15 ones;
- disposal of 30 polluting drums and of a 1.000 m²-surface with asbestos;
- over 1.500 students familiarized with the notions of SPA, SCIs and with the project in general;
- increased knowledge about population status of species and habitats of Community interest.

The [Project Communication Plan](#) has proved to be very useful in promoting awareness-raising, especially of the resident population, on the importance of adequately protecting and enhancing the biodiversity of the area. The initiative also increased the potential for ecotourism development as a means of enhancing and protecting habitats and species as source of local development.

Acronym: LIFE MONTI DELLA TOLFA

Number of reference: LIFE08NAT/IT/000316

Reference programme: [LIFE](#)

Website: <http://www.lifemontidellatolfa.it>

Keywords: [Habitats directive](#), [Birds Directive](#), [SPA IT6030005](#), [SCI IT6030003](#), [SCI IT6030008](#), [SCI IT6030001](#), [91MO](#), [9210](#), [honey buzzard](#), [black kite](#), [red kite](#), [short-toed eagle](#), [Montagu's harrier](#), [peregrin](#), [Lanner falcon](#), [lesser kestrel](#), [grey shrike](#), [lesser grey shrike](#), [calandra lark](#), [short-toed lark](#), [tawny pipit](#), [black stork](#), [common](#), [ingfisher](#), [European roller](#), [stone-curlew](#), [ortolan bunting](#), [nightjar](#), [woodlark](#), [Dartford warbler](#), [Merlin](#), [red-footed falcon](#), [hen harrier](#), [Eleonora's falcon](#), [booted eagle](#), [western marsh harrier](#), [stag beetle](#), [spectacled](#), [alamander](#), [great capricorn beetle](#), [rosalia alpina](#), [Italian crested newt](#), [yellow-bellied toad](#), [European pound turtle](#), [four-lined snake](#), [bat](#).

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Theme: [Natura e biodiversità](#)

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Beneficiary headquarters: Largo G. Fara, 1 Manziana (RM) 00055

Project area Region: Lazio.

Regione Lazio, Comune di Manziana, Comune di Tolfa, Comune di Allumiere, Comune di Canale Monterano, ZPS IT6030005, SIC IT6030003, SIC IT6030008, SIC IT6030001, 91MO,9210

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