ENHANCING THE CONSERVATION STATUS OF THE PRIORITY APENNINE BEECH FORESTS HABITATS THROUGH THE CREATION OF OPEN AREAS AND GRAZING REGULATION

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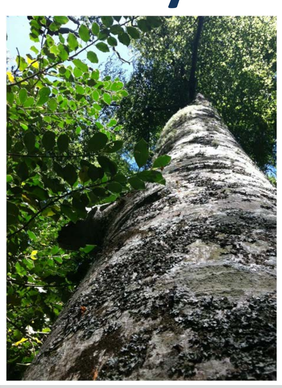
Priority habitats targeted by the project



Habitat 9210* Apennine beech forests with *Taxus* and *Ilex*

Beech forests with *Taxus baccata* and *Ilex aquifolium* in the shrub layer that are spread along the Apennine chain and in the Maritime Alps.

Habitat 9220* Apennine beech forests with *Abies alba*

Mixed woodlands characterized by numerous southern European orophilous species.

In the Apennines, yew, holly and silver fir were much more spread than today. Their current limited distribution is due to the impact on forest systems of human activities, such as harvesting, grazing and fire.

Project areas


SCI Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga


SCI Monte Motola


SCI Monti Alburni

Creation of gaps

Gaps play a preminent role in forest horizontal heterogeneity and influence organisms through several mechanisms.

A study performed in the Cilento National Park showed that many of the epiphytic lichens associated to the most structurally heterogeneous forests are related to gaps (*Buellia disciformis*, *Pertusaria hemisphaerica*, *Collema subflaccidum*).

Also the diversity of vascular plants is enhanced by gaps that allows for the presence of species with highly diverse light requirements (Blasi et al. 2010 – Plant Biosystems).

Finally gaps will increase the density of fleshy-fruited shrubs that favor yew and holly by (i) attracting frugivorous birds that act as disperser, (ii) maintaining a favourable microclimate (especially during the summer drought).
Gap sizes will be based on research performed in southern Europe beech forests (Rugani et al., 2013 – PlosOne).

Conservation actions

Promotion of the regeneration of yew, holly and silver fir


Fencing of regeneration patches

Enhancement of the diversity of birds.


Creation of habitat trees


Release of deadwood

Enhancement of the diversity of saproxylic beetles and fungi


Creation of gaps

Diversification of understorey plants and epyphytic lichens

Fencing of regeneration patches

One of the main threats to the regeneration of *Taxus baccata*, *Ilex aquifolium* and *Abies alba* is grazing by livestock and rooting by wild boar.
In some of the project areas the seedlings of under-represented species may be particularly affected by herbivores, also due to the scarce beech forests understory. In fact it has been demonstrated that recruitment of yew and holly are favoured by exclosures (Farris et al., 2008 - Plant Ecol; Perrin et al., 2006 -For Eco Mng).

Where grazing or rooting is more intense fences will be built around groups of mother trees or of regeneration patches, especially in the newly created gaps in order to substantially favor the recruitment of the target species.

More info on: www.fagus-life-project.eu