RESTORING BIODIVERSITY ALONG THE ITALIAN GREENBELT

Forgotten bunkers, abandoned meadows and disappearing ponds

This 2-years project (Nov. 2022-Oct. 2024) aims at restoring biodiversity by re-defining the role of past war-related sites: from negative elements, to life-giving sites where rare wildlife thrives.

The project will take place in the Julian Prealps Nature Park (Lusevera municipality, Italy) where we plan various complementary activities to ensure the correct dissemination and visibility of EGB values and project actions while promoting capacity building for stakeholders for a sustainable local economy.

**Forgotten bunkers**

**Challenge:** European bats are poorly studied species and are experiencing severe population declines and the loss of roosting habitats is considered a pivotal driver.

**Objective:** Restore >2 forgotten Cold War bunkers which will be actively used by bats.

**Approach:** Bat-friendly interventions will consist in providing suitable entrances and substrates for bats to roost and hopefully breed. Monitoring before-and-after intervention will occur throughout the project lifetime using camera traps and bat detector.

**Abandoned meadows**

**Challenge:** Shrub encroachment processes are causing the disappearance of long-term established alpine grassland habitats and its associated biodiversity.

**Objective:** In an abandoned Cold War shooting range (currently a sub-Mediterranean N2000 dry grassland Scorzonetalia villosae), we will remove some encroaching shrubs and trees favoring existing open grassland species.

**Approach:** Mechanical removal of target trees and shrubs. Biodiversity monitoring before-and-after intervention will be carried out via field observation activities and drone images.

**Disappearing ponds**

**Challenge:** Shrub encroachment processes are causing the disappearance of long-term established alpine grassland habitats and its associated biodiversity.

**Objective:** In an abandoned Cold War shooting range (currently a sub-Mediterranean N2000 dry grassland Scorzonetalia villosae), we will remove some encroaching shrubs and trees favoring existing open grassland species.

**Approach:** Mechanical removal of target trees and shrubs. Biodiversity monitoring before-and-after intervention will be carried out via field observation activities and drone images.

**Challenge:** Restore 5 disappearing ponds threatened by soil and vegetation infilling and spread of invasive species.

**Objective:** Improving abiotic and biotic conditions for threatened breeding amphibians while providing bats suitable site for foraging.

**Approach:** Manual removal of overgrowth vegetation, algal blooms and excess soil. Monitoring approaches will assess the change in vegetation and soil depth while monitoring pond wildlife before-and-after interventions.

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