

Fauna, Flora and Habitats targeted by the project

The LIFE PRATERIE project will significantly benefit the conservation status of important animal species, which are very representative of this protected area, such as the Orsini viper, the Italian crested newt and the Apennine chamois, the latter being the symbol of the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park.

At the same time, the project will enhance the opportunities of protection for many precious vegetal species and habitats, some of which of priority importance according to the European legislation:

6210* Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia).

6230* Species-rich *Nardus* grasslands, on silicious substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas in Continental Europe).

8210 Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmo-phytic vegetation.

5130 *Juniperus communis* formations on he-

aths or calcareous grasslands.

6170 Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands.

8120 Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (*Thlaspietea rotundifolii*).

7140 Transition mires and quaking bogs.

3150 Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition*.

** Priority habitats according to the EU habitats directive*



Triturus canrifex

Vipera Ursinii

Racollo lake

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Urgent actions
for the conservation
of grasslands and pastures
in the territory of Gran Sasso
and Monti della Laga

Progetto LIFE+ Praterie
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What is LIFE PRATERIE?

The main goal of the project is the long-term conservation of different types of habitats in the territory of the Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga National Park, by encouraging appropriate grazing practices and less impacting tourism management.

Grasslands, especially the ones that can be

found on the high plains of Campo Imperatore, have always been closely bonded to extensive sheep, goat, cattle and horse farming, an activity that has brought richness to the communities in the Gran Sasso mountain range, and which still represents one of the most significant sustainable economic activities in the National Park range. The conservation of the nature value of the grasslands is strictly dependent from the sustainability of these centuries-old practices and from the adoption of appropriate livestock farming practices. However, nowadays some pastures



Grazing flock



Apennine chamois



Crocus vernus

are partially overloaded because of the cattle concentrating near watering places whereas the decrease of extensive livestock farming practices might cause localized abandonment of the pastures in other areas. These factors are likely to cause a decline and reduction of the habitats for precious plant and animal species. Moreover, thanks to their beautiful and charming landscapes, the high plains of Campo Imperatore attract thousands of visitors each year, and therefore the grasslands are constantly subject to the impact through tourism and hiking. If they are not properly

The project actions

Aiming at the long-term protection of grasslands from the threats deriving from the farming and tourism activities, the project focuses onto the strategic aspects of the grazing regulations and of the touristic development in areas with a high nature value. Moreover it foresees activities to improve the relationships with the involved local stakehol-



Aster alpinus

protected, the surrounding grasslands might suffer severe degradation due to the erosion and the inadequate maintenance of the intensively used hiking trails.

Therefore, considering the high number of high nature value habitats present in the area, the project aims to encourage less impacting livestock raising and tourism management practices, by applying an integrated participatory decision making approach. This shall encourage the conservation of the grasslands and strengthen their value as an important heritage for the future generations.

ders in order to successfully share the project's inner meaning and goals, by adopting a participatory decision making procedure, which shall take into account the management and socio-economic problems livestock breeders face. A row of infrastructural interventions will be implemented in order to directly improve the habitat conservation, such as the

construction of new water troughs that aim to encourage the animals to spread more evenly all over the territory, as well as the installation of enclosures and shelters for calves and sheep to limit the damages caused by predation and thus to avoid social conflicts.

At least three small mountain lakes will also be fenced to prevent the cattle from destroying their shores, thus causing eutrophication of the water. Moreover, throughout the project, an action foresees to provide information and technical support to livestock raisers in order to spread the best grazing management practices. Among the actions dedicated to the tourist management, the project includes a



Adonis vernalis



Campo Imperatore grasslands

partial restoration of the hiking paths, the implementation of eight parking areas for cars and recreational vehicles, and the installation of appropriate panels that should encourage the tourist flows to converge on dedicated areas in order to safeguard the meadows and pastures. Good land use practices will be spread among breeders and the general public thanks to the opening of information points in four strategic areas within the Park, and through the development of information and awareness campaigns about the project and about the respectful and conscious use of the territory as a common good.