

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 chasmophytic 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*



Vipera Ursinii

Triturus canrifex

Racollo lake



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life
Praterie

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

What is LIFE PRATERIE

The Life project “Praterie” aims at the long-term conservation of grasslands and pastures in the territory of Gran Sasso and 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 of 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 on the sustainability of these centuries-old practices and on the adoption of appropriate livestock far-

ming practices. However, nowadays some pastures are partially overgrazed because of the cattle concentrating near watering places. Contrarily, in other areas the decrease of extensive livestock farming practices might cause localized abandonment of the pastures with consequent scrub encroachment.

These factors are likely to cause a decline and reduction of the habitats for precious plant and animal species. Moreover, due to their beautiful landscapes, the park’s grasslands are constantly subject to the impact of tourism

and hiking; the most used paths are often affected by erosion and the flowing water carries the gravel onto the surrounding meadows. 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 will encourage the conservation of the grasslands and strengthen their value as an important heritage for the future generations.

The project actions

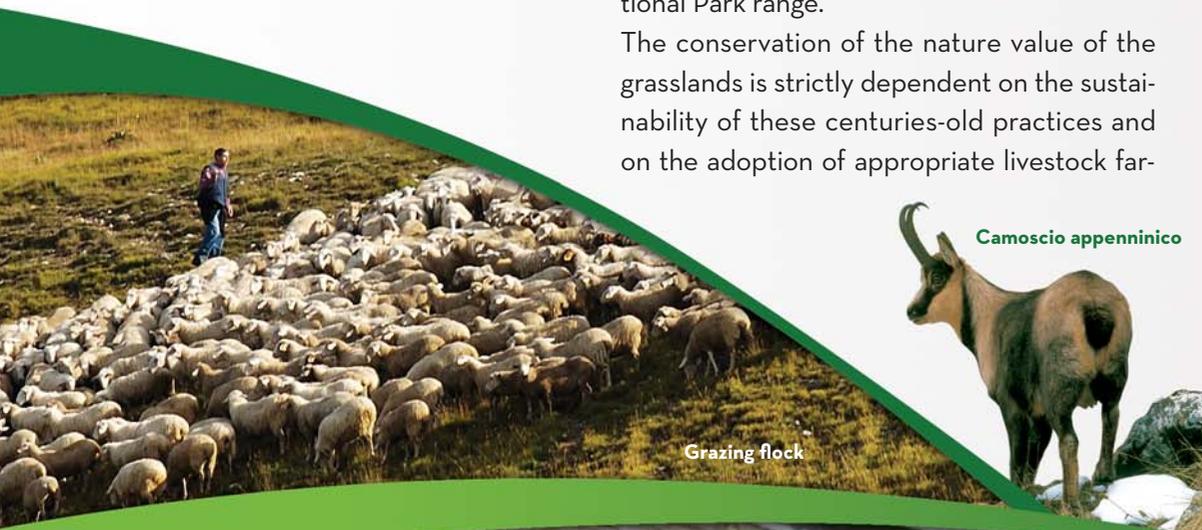
The adoption of a participatory process that involves the park’s stakeholders is a strong added value of the project. It has the aim to value the conservation of grasslands in relation to human activities, such as grazing and tourism, which traditionally take place in the project area. To reach this aim participatory workshops and meetings have been organized

in order to commonly write guidelines for the new Grazing Regulations, which will be issued by the Park’s authority and local administrations, and which shall be shared by all the involved stakeholders.

In order to reduce the impact on grasslands the restoration of existing water troughs has begun, as well as the construction of new

ones. This should encourage the livestock to spread more evenly all over the territory. At the same time mobile housings for lambs and fences for cattle and horses have been distributed among the farmers in order to prevent predation, avoid social conflicts and motivate commitment to the project. At least three small mountain lakes will be fenced to prevent the cattle from destroying their shores, thus causing eutrophication of the water. Moreover, throughout the project experts are providing information and technical support to livestock raisers in order to spread the best grazing management practices and animals health care.

Among the actions dedicated to the tourism management, the project has started the restoration of hiking paths, the implementation of several parking areas and the installation of appropriate panels to better direct the visitors flow and guarantee at the same time the hikers safety and the conservation of grassland biodiversity. Best practices of land use are also spread among breeders and the general public thanks to the project’s Help Desk and through the dissemination of information about the project and the respectful and sustainable use of the territory.



Grazing flock



Camoscio appenninico



Crocus vernus



Aster alpinus



Adonis vernalis



Praterie di Campo Imperatore