

Actions in support of biodiversity in the Park of the Groane

The Regional Park of the Groane is a protected area of 3.000 ha at the foot of the Alps, in a highly urbanized area north of Milan.

The Park includes a number of different environments including wetlands and one heath, the southernmost of Europe. This has a high natural value because it represents one of the last few patches of vegetation typical of the poorest soils of the fluvio-glacial terraces of the Upper Padana Valley.

The Park is not only subject to strong external pressure from increasing land development; it also has problems within its borders. The heath is fragmented into several small patches and some areas are in an advanced stage of evolution towards fairly stable acid-tolerant woodlands.

The wetlands have many problems: some of them are in serious decline, some suffer from eutrophication and are therefore at risk of disappearing. Other, small and shallow wetlands are dry for long periods in summer and are sometimes colonized by wet meadows. In short, lack of water is a serious threat to the survival of plant communities typical of these environments.

To reverse this trend and strengthen the rich biodiversity, a project has been launched in the Park of the Groane to reinforce the ecological corridor between two Sites of Community Importance within the Park: the Cesate Pinewood and the Groane Woods. The conservation project directly affects 12 species of birds, 7 amphibians, 8 reptiles and 3 different habitats, including the southernmost heathland of Europe mentioned earlier.



As part of this project numerous trees were planted, stumps of several exotic species were removed, some ponds were restored, corridors for the migration of amphibians and small animals were created, the shrubs that smothered the heath were removed, nest boxes were placed, and special information boards and signs restricting access to sensitive areas of the park were installed.

All these actions form a valuable contribution to the conservation and increase of biodiversity in this precious area.

For further information:

Regional Section of WWF Lombardia:

<http://www.wwf.it/client/render.aspx?content=0&root=2994>

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