

**gestire**   
natura 2000 in Lombardia

# PROTECTING NATURA 2000 NETWORK IN LOMBARDY

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Finito di stampare a maggio 2015

Realizzato nell'ambito del progetto LIFE11 NAT/IT/00044 GESTIRE

Finanziato con il sostegno dello strumento LIFE della Commissione Europea

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Sostenuto da





*Bombina variegata* - Ph Marco Chemollo

## NATURA 2000 NETWORK

Natura 2000 is a network of nature protection areas, established under the 1979 Birds Directive and 1992 Habitats Directive, to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. It is comprised of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated to guarantee the conservation of birds, natural habitats and fauna and flora species, among which some are considered of "priority interest".

## NATURA 2000 IN LOMBARDY

Lombardy Region is well-known for being one of the most industrialised and populated regions of Europe. Not everyone knows, however, that it also has a very rich natural heritage: glaciers and alpine lakes, fields and grasslands, wetlands and peat bogs, rivers and streams, forests and moors. This variety represents a unique mosaic of habitats, home to rare and threatened wildlife and plant species and contributes to the conservation of European biodiversity for future generations.

Natura 2000 in Lombardy means:

- 242 Natura 2000 sites, representing a key part for the conservation of biodiversity in Europe. They extend over about 15% of Lombardy: 193 are Sites of Community Importance (SCI) and 67 are Special Protection Areas for birds (SPA). In 2014, 46 SCIs have been converted into SACs (Special Areas of Conservation).
- 57 habitats of Community interest, among which 16 are defined as "priority" habitats, namely places at risk of disappearing at a continental level. Their surface covers about 21% of the overall surface of regional habitats of Community interest.
- 74 species of Community interest listed in the Habitats Directive Annexes of which 47 are animal species, 13 mammals, 14 fish, 5 amphibians and reptiles, 15 invertebrates and 27 plant species.
- 87 bird species included in Annex I of the Birds Directive.

Supporting the system of Natura 2000 sites, in 2009 the Regional government established the Regional Ecological Network, in order to ensure the ecological connection between the most important areas for biodiversity in the territory, connecting Natura 2000 sites.



*Lagopus muta* - Ph Paolo Manzi



*Coniferous forest habitat* - Ph Franco Angelini



*Alcedo atthis* - Ph Paolo Manzi

## LOMBARDY: A RICH VARIETY OF HABITATS AND SPECIES

Lombardy has a variety of landscapes and different natural conditions, from the Alpine and boreal lands to the plain areas of the Po valley. Natura 2000 sites of Lombardy fall within two biogeographical regions, the Alpine and Continental regions, that have a different characteristic blend of vegetation, climate and geology, thus determining a rich biodiversity.

### Habitats

In the Alpine region, along with beech and *coniferous forest habitats*, there are significant natural and semi-natural grassland formations and hay meadows, alpine and boreal heaths and rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation, where several native plant species grow. Active raised bogs are also a typical alpine habitat, although less common.

The most interesting habitats in the Continental region are the Po Valley's wetlands, standing and running water habitats, bog woodlands and alluvial and riparian mixed forests and oak forests, what remains of formerly larger woodlands. Petrifying springs and dry heats are also typical habitats of Lombardy.

### Wildlife species

Wildlife biodiversity in Lombardy reflects the variety of natural habitats and it is equally rich in invertebrate species, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Many species are of Community interest.

The rice fields and wetlands of the region are home to important populations of herons such as egret, red heron and night heron, while Alpine habitats include galliformes such as the white partridge and birds of prey such like lammergeier and golden eagle.

The Po Valley plain wetlands hosts protected species of amphibians and reptiles including some native species such as the common spadefoot, the endemic Lataste frog and the rare marsh tortoise. Among mammals in Lombardy there are different species of threatened bats such as the Geoffroy's bat and, recently, large carnivores like brown bear and wolf, slowly returning in the region as in other parts of the Alpine Region and Europe.

Insects include several species closely related to specific habitats such as the alpine rosalia longicorn. Among fish species, the number of protected and threatened species is particularly relevant, since some can be found only in the Po River basin such as the Adriatic sturgeon, the Lombardy lamprey and the marble trout.

### Plant species

Lombardy boasts a remarkable variety of flora, accounting for almost half of the vascular species found throughout the entire national territory and 60 native species. The Habitats Directive includes only some of the great number of native species of plants of Lombardy and the importance of the regional territory for flora biodiversity is relevant.

Wetland species include *Eleocharis carniolica*, *Myosotis rehsteineri*, *Gladiolus palustris*, *Isoëtes malinverniana* and the rare water clover *Marsilea quadrifolia*. Peat bogs host endangered moss species and other rare species like the small orchid *Liparis loeselii*. Alpine habitats, especially calcareous rubble, scree and rocky environments host many rare, localized and indigenous plants, such as rock mezereon, saxifrage of Presolana, Tonzig's linaria. In forest habitats the beautiful orchid *Cypripedium calceolus*, the most widespread species of community interest in Lombardy, can be found.



Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* - Ph Parco Colli di Bergamo



*Gypaetus barbatus* - Ph Paolo Manzi

## PRESSURES AND THREATS

Lombardy is a densely populated area. The conservation of habitats and wild species is therefore challenged by many pressures: changes in soil use and transport infrastructures (roads, highways, railways, artificial channels, high-speed trains), climate change and presence of invasive alien species. Plant species such as black cherry, red oak, American pokeweed and orange eye butterfly bush are a threat for the conservation of protected habitats and for ecosystem services. Also invasive animal species like grey squirrel, Louisiana crayfish and the red-eared slider can be a serious threat to native species. Moreover, the functionality of habitats is also threatened by water shortages, lowering of groundwater and pollution of water courses.

## MANAGING NATURA 2000

The management of Natura 2000 in Lombardy is assigned to various management authorities: regional protected areas, Regional Authority for Agricultural and Forestry Services (ERSAF), State Forestry Service and local authorities such as municipalities, provinces and mountain communities. Regional parks are the main managing bodies and manage 121 sites, for an overall surface of about 123.000 ha, 60% of the whole SCI and SPA surface.

## LIFE GESTIRE PROJECT

LIFE GESTIRE aims to implement a strategic management plan able to restore and manage sites, habitats and species to satisfactory condition, taking into consideration all sources of funding and identifying a list of priority actions to be taken within the next decade.

LIFE GESTIRE also aims at joint, shared and integrated programming in order to manage the Natura 2000 Network at a regional level, as well as better integration of the regional policies affecting the territory through cooperation with the different departments dealing with Natura 2000 related fields in the regional administration, such as agriculture and water management.

The two main results of the project, which will be adapted to the Lombardy context, are:

- the Policy Paper for the management of Natura 2000 sites;
- the "Prioritized Actions Framework" for the Natura 2000 Network.



*Rana latastei* - Ph Marco Chemollo

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- Creation of a Natura 2000 Group, composed of the representatives of regional departments to ensure consistent programming for the management of the Natura 2000 Network in Lombardy through various regional policies;
- Collection, storage and analysis of documents concerning Natura 2000 Lombardy site management such as the Natura 2000 Site Management Plans and the Action Plans;
- Analysis of European case studies (best practices) for habitat and site management;
- Assessment of the socio-economic value of Lombardy's Natura 2000 Network;
- Analysis of current legislation on the Natura 2000 Network and updating or improvement
- Analysis of green jobs related to Natura 2000 in Lombardy including the qualitative-quantitative green job assessment, job description and identification of training paths;

- Formulation of conservation measures for those sites without Management Plans and of measures needed for the interconnection of the network's sites;
- Development of a Financial Plan for the management of the Natura 2000 Network in Lombardy for 2014-2020;
- Preparation of the Policy Paper for management of the Natura 2000 Network in Lombardy;
- Drafting of the "Prioritized Actions Framework";
- Formulation of the Natura 2000 Network scientific monitoring programme;
- Realization of a regional information and communication campaign aimed at promoting Natura 2000 Lombardy Network and its importance for biodiversity and quality of life;
- Outlining guidelines for the conservation of biodiversity within the Natura 2000 Network by citizens and companies;
- Consultation with stakeholders in Lombardy (Natura 2000 site management authorities, local authorities, tourism operators, farmers, etc.) in order to ensure their active participation in the process, outlining the strategy for the integrated management of the Natura 2000 Network in Lombardy.

## PROJECT PARTNERS

**Lombardy Region - Direzione Generale Ambiente, Energia e Sviluppo sostenibile**, coordinating beneficiary of GESTIRE, coordinates the regional Natura 2000 Network.

**Centro Turistico Studentesco e giovanile (CTS)** is a non-profit association and authority for the protection of environment.

**Comunità Ambiente (CA)** is a company with a background of experience in nature conservation at a community level with special reference to the realization of Natura 2000 Network.

**Ente Regionale per i Servizi all'Agricoltura e alle Foreste (ERSAF)** carries out technical, research and promotional activities for development in the agricultural and forestry fields and for Lombardy's rural territory. It manages 13 Natura 2000 sites, six natural reserves and 20 regional forests.

**Fondazione Lombardia per Ambiente (FLA)** carries out research, training and information activities in the environmental field and develops projects related to the study and protection of biodiversity and protected areas.

**Legambiente (LIPU)** is an association for the conservation of biodiversity and birds and the promotion of ecological culture.

**Fondazione Cariplo**, co-financing the project is a banking foundation operating in the fields of scientific research, art and culture, services for the people and the environment.



*Canis lupus - Ph. Vincenzo Martegani*



Petrifying springs habitat - Ph Parco Montevicchia e Valle del Corone

## LIFE: FUTURE PROSPECTS

The work and the results achieved by the project so far have allowed Regione Lombardia to apply for funding for the realisation of the integrated LIFE project which will implement PAF actions through the coordinated use of European, national, regional and private complementary funds.

In particular, the consideration of certain complexities and needs met during the implementation of the LIFE GESTIRE project led to the identification of a set of strategic actions among the priority actions identified in the PAF intended to:

- Increase coordination and participation among management authorities and regional bodies in charge through capacity building activities;
- Improve the Natura 2000 Network governance and management models, also using PES (Payments for Ecosystem Services);
- Develop the necessary interventions for the ecological connection;
- Maintain and improve the state of conservation of habitats and species;
- Contrast the spread of invasive alien species;
- Raise awareness and increase information on the value and potential of the Natura 2000 areas in the Lombardy Region.

This initiative has been realized within the action F3 of LIFE11 NAT/IT/000044 "GESTIRE" project, financed under LIFE by the European Commission.

**[www.naturachevale.it](http://www.naturachevale.it) - [www.life-gestire.eu](http://www.life-gestire.eu)**

**Photos: [www.paolomanzi.it](http://www.paolomanzi.it)**