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Introduction

Anthropic activities in human dominated landscapes, is causing widespread biodiversity loss and declines in ecosystem condition worldwide (Chapin III et al., 2000; Díaz et al. 2006). The intensification of agricultural and silvicultural practices, land abandonment and other land uses such as recreation and hunting, represent potential threats which may lead to conflicts between stakeholder livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. Biodiversity loss is a matter of great concern among conservation scientist, but the wherewithal to reverse this trend is generally lacking. One reason, is which nearly half of the world's people live in urban areas and are disconnected from nature. Ecological restoration is considered as one of the best strategies to increase the provision of ecosystem services as well as reversing biodiversity loss (Chapin III et al., 2000; Díaz et al. 2006). Collaboration among partners belonging to different countries, may represent an effective tool to prevent and/or reverse this phenomenon. Anyway, social and cultural barriers can make interaction difficult and, consequently, reduce the effectiveness of each conservation action.

The aim of the Interreg NAT2CARE Italy-Slovenia Project is to promote the biodiversity preservation in Natura 2000 Areas belonging to the three project partner Parks: Giulian Pre-Alps Regional Natural Park, Friulan Dolomites Regional Natural Park, and Triglav National Park, involving the realization of specific actions focused in avoiding the risk of fragmentation, reduction and biodiversity loss. Moreover, the collaboration established between partners belonging to different countries, will make it possible to strengthen the ties between partners themselves, and to overcome the boundaries imposed by cultural barriers.

Materials and Methods

The Project started in early 2018 and will last until the middle of 2020, with an overall duration of 30 months, and the Partners involved are: Julian Pre-Alps Regional Nature Park (Lead Partner), Triglav National Park, Friuli Dolomites Regional Nature Park, the University of Udine, the Slovenian National Institute of Biology, and the Naklo Biotechnical Centre.



Figure 1: Brown bear captured with camera-trapping.

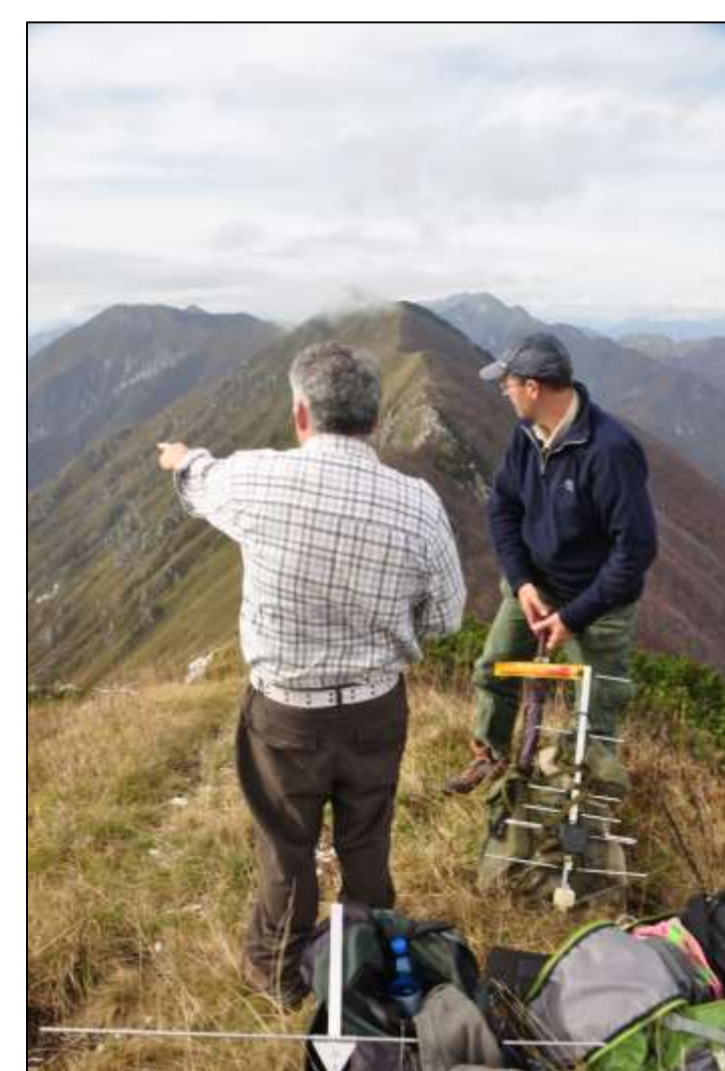


Figure 2: Two operators during a radio-tracking session.

The research program will have to contribute to define, apply and evaluate innovative monitoring protocols, regarding the presence and management of both mammal and bird species of community and conservation interest (brown bear, grey wolf, lynx, chamois, alpine ibex, golden eagle, griffon vulture, corncrake, etc.). A key feature of the project is the transboundary dimension concerning the implementation of the planned actions, as all the animal species that are being monitored move easily from one country to another in a territory characterized by habitats with very similar characteristics. For this reason, the approach should be applied at transboundary level and a common protocol will be followed.



Figure 3: Alpine ibex. Photo taken by Dr. Marta Trevisan.



Figure 4: Griffon vulture. Photo taken by Dr. Marta Trevisan.

In addition, the Project aims to identify and promote eco-systemic services, and carry out awareness-raising, environmental education and active citizenship engagement, also in monitoring activities. Monitoring actions should also consider and evaluate the effect of bird presence, habitats, and human activities, and the research project will have to develop methods, addressed to citizens and stakeholder, which allow them to spread the goals and the methods used, as well as the intermediate and final results achieved, mainly through the realization of a communication plan, which involves the use of social networks, the publication of digital and paper material, brochures' drafting, and advertising campaigns. Considerable importance is given to implement useful methods, with the aim to increase the knowledge and awareness of citizens, stakeholders and managers, concerning the issues of biodiversity and wildlife conservation, making them the main suppliers of information, for achieving technical and scientific results.



Figure 5: Environmental education activity.



Figure 6: Wolf captured with camera-trapping. Photo taken by Dr. Andrea Vendramin.

Expected Results

Through the activities of the NAT2CARE Project it will be possible to improve the transboundary cooperation in order to promote the nature conservation. The Project actions will be finalized to both conservation and restoration of biodiversity, through the management of eco-systemic services in the three involved Project Partners Parks. The involvement of citizens and stakeholders will raise awareness and disseminate issues related to the importance of biodiversity conservation. More, the environmental education activity will provide important information concerning the adoption of an appropriate behaviour within a naturalistic context, to promote the optimal maintenance of natural and cultural heritage.

References

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