Biodiversity Bridges: systemic co-creation approach to build the environment of the future

Verona, Italy

WBA Project Srl

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award Category: International Biodiversity Project Award

Project overview: The BIODIVERSITY BRIDGES project aims to develop new territorial management models inspired by the principles of environmental, social and economic sustainability, with particular attention to the protection of biodiversity. In particular, the Project plans to enhance three areas considered model biotopes of the province of Verona. The project will end on October 31, 2024.

What were the biodiversity conditions on site prior to the enhancement? The three areas affected by the project are: Parco Monte Tenda in Soave, Parco della Valpolicella between Fumane and Marano, Parco le Vallette e Oasi Valle Brusà in Cerea. These three biotopes are important areas for biodiversity but often neglected and not known.

Parco di Monte Tenda has unique characteristics as it can be considered the largest surface of the Soavese area occupied by arid meadows, a habitat of community interest (6210*).

Parco della Valpolicella is characterized by the singular mixture of habitats, by arid meadows to mountain woods, from agricultural environments to wet areas. In the park there are numerous animal and vegetable species included in the attachments of the Habitat Directive.

The Oasis Valle Brusà is rich in biodiversity, with numerous animal and vegetable species typical of wetlands. In addition is UNESCO site for the stilts found.

What were the reasons behind this project? The main objective of the project is to develop a deeper sensitivity and awareness of the naturalistic wealth of its territory by the various subjects who live in it. The Projetc involves 12 partners of the Veronese territory including institutions, associations, schools, reclamation consortia and entities. Biodiversity Bridges wants to be ideal bridges between natural areas located in different territories and between different approaches to the increasingly problematic relationship between man and nature.

Soil monitoring activities

Animal species census: Saga pedo

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The interventions provided, between 2021 and 2024, were the mapping of naturalistic emergencies and the census of the plant and animal species present; the identification of the major critical issues related to the maintenance of ecological balances; hydraulic and forestry accommodation interventions for the protection of natural areas and the planting of three hectares of forest (in total 5100 plants).

Thanks to the participation of various schools, courses and educational initiatives designed for students were added to the environmental interventions.

In the various areas, experiential demonstration installations have been positioned, such as natural honeycomb arnie and bug hotel for wild bees, phytodepuration systems, areas dedicated to the presentation of demonstrative agronomic practices with reduced environmental impact and webcam for the real time monitoring of wildlife.

As part of the project to enhance the 3 areas, Biodiversity Itineraries have been created, and subsequently put online in order to favor their use.

These itineraries are experiential and interactive and include, as points of interest, both the naturalistic peculiarities present in the areas, and the experiential demonstration installations, created and positioned by the students of the partner institutes.

In addition, the project allowed the realization within the natural areas of the "outdoor classes", defined as Bio-Lab (Biodiversity Laboratory), that is, structures in which students can study biodiversity, using tools and equipment of naturalists.

The Bio-Lab, in fact, is equipped with materials and equipment necessary for naturalistic investigations: binoculars, microscopes, entomological materials (boxes, wisdom, retini, etc.), herbarium presses, magnifying glass, materials for the preparation of the champions , manuals and guides.

Students placing a bug house in a natural area

Students in the biolab observing material under the microscope

Further information

The project has allowed the enhancement of the 3 biotopes through numerous activities: planting of native species, creation of wetlands, plant barriers and much more. These actions will favor the increase of biodiversity over time as they create favorable habitats for the typical fauna and flora of the area.

Furthermore, the involvement of students and citizens of the area has allowed for greater awareness.

One of the education institutions partner, following its involvement in the project, designed and activated the "Environment" option in the curriculum already present at the Applied Sciences high school, implemented with an environmental direction.

The Project made it possible to disseminate specific knowledge and skills to students in environmental monitoring and in the study and conservation of biodiversity. Analysis in the field and in the laboratory, planting of hedges and woods, creation of structures capable of conserving biodiversity allow us to give a sustainability perspective to the country and have new employment opportunities for the future. The activities carried out within the project are suitable for replication with other bodies and in other areas, as they present a high degree of replicability.

Project Team

The project is supported by the Cariverona Foundation in the context of the Bando Habitat 2020. The project team consists of WBA Project Srl as the leader, and 12 partners of the territory including Municipalities, Entities, Schools, and Associations.

What was the motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

We have chosen to create this project to pursue our two mission: **"Conservation by Education"** to affirm the fundamental role of education in the conservation of natural environments and protect diversity, the right to life of every organism, the environmental balance and avoid the extinction of thousands of species. **"Discovering Biodiversity"** to actively contribute to the inventory of our planet's biological diversity through naturalistic expeditions to biodiversity hot spots.

Reforestation activities

Laboratory on the theme of biodiversity