The Marsican brown bear

Today the small population of the Marsican brown bear (*Ursus arctos marsicanus*, Altobello 1921) numbers about 50 individuals, mainly concentrated within their core area in the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park (ALMNP). For this reason, the Marsican brown bear is included in the Red List of the Italian Vertebrates of the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) as a subspecies critically endangered with extinction.

Genetic research has demonstrated the uniqueness of this subspecies of brown bear, whose survival is strictly dependent on the quality of its natural environment, on the reduction of human-related threats, such as habitat fragmentation, poaching, and conflicts with rural activities, and on the capacity to reclaim suitable lands outside of the refuge area of the ALMNP.

Ph: Giampiero Cuolo

Why Salviamo l'Orso?

Salviamo l'Orso is an NGO which was created in 2012 for the purpose of implementing practical actions to reduce threats to the Marsican brown bear while actively helping to preserve the species in the Central Apennines.

The Salviamo l'Orso volunteer group has grown over time and has been gaining valuable professional resources and now boasts a proactive squad that is a trailblazer for bear conservation issues.

Ph: Marco Novelli

Who we are

Biologists, naturalists, managers, students, workers, professionals, teachers, rangers, clerks… each one of them are nature-loving volunteers who care deeply about the future of the Marsican brown bear.

Ph: Carlo Maria Vitale

How we operate

To preserve and foster the expansion of the Marsican brown bear population in its habitat, Salviamo l'Orso carries out:

1. Actions to reduce human-related conflicts.
2. Activities to monitor the presence of bears.
3. Sensitization to and information about public opinion and the relevant authorities.
4. Environmental education initiatives for both children and adults on bear biology, best conservation practices and best practices for man-bear coexistence.
5. Collaboration with public and private organizations that are committed to the same issue and are in charge of the study and management of this species.
6. Disease prevention actions to avoid the passage of potentially lethal diseases from domestic animals onto the bear.
7. Fundraising to support actions for the conservation of the species and its environment and help for those who, living with it, may be impacted, such as local farmers.

Ph: Siro Ballva

Ph: Angela Tavone

Ph: Angela Tavone

Our projects

Bear Smart Community

This project, based on American know-how, promotes the efforts of local communities, businesses, and individuals to prevent man-bear conflicts in the territory of Pettorano sul Gizio and Rocca Pia, where a bear was shot dead in September 2014. Salviamo l'Orso organizes meetings with local communities, purchases and sets up electric fences to secure small farms near the urban centers, and makes organic waste bins bear proof. Both Italian or foreign volunteers are taking part in the project implementation.

Road ecology

This project consists of setting deterrent measures to prevent wildlife-vehicle collisions along road stretches where bear crossing are often reported.
Road signs that raise drivers' awareness and special wildlife deterrent reflex reflectors were set up along SR 83 "Marsicana", between Gioia dei Marsi and Gioia Vecchio as well as between Gioia Vecchio and Pescasseroli; along SS 479 between Villalago and Scanno; and along SP 17 in the municipality of Bisegna. Moreover, our volunteers maintain on a regular basis some underpasses of SS 17 in the municipalities of Pettorano sul Gizio and Rocca Pia to make wildlife crossing safer.

Let's take action for the bear

This project enhances the habitat of the Marsican brown bear while, at the same time, promoting outdoor activities. Projects include:

- Pruning abandoned fruit trees to increase food sources for the bears in mountain areas outside of the villages of Pettorano and Rocca Pia.

- Setting up optic and acoustic wildlife deterrent reflex reflectors along 11 km of SS 17 to mitigate the risk of wildlife-vehicle collisions.
- Removal of 4 km of barbed wire from the mountains between Bisegna and Villalago to restore the habitat quality and the natural landscape.
- Recovery and improvement of the signage along three paths in the Mainarde mountains to minimize disturbance that free roaming hikers may cause to the Marsican bear and other species.

Local communities and many volunteers are taking part to these activities.