

A day in the life of an Animal Welfare Volunteer

**Claire Graham a
Plymouth University
student recalls her experiences
at Salviamo l'Orso
Pescara**

Photograph courtesy of Francesco Culicelli

What does it really mean to work in the field as an animal welfare volunteer?

Claire Graham gives us a brief insight into the life of an animal welfare volunteer:

Last summer I volunteered with Salviamo l'Orso as part of my placement year at Plymouth university; I study Conservation Biology and having the chance to work for an organisation dedicated to saving the endangered Marsican brown bear was a great experience!

I first heard about the work Salviamo l'Orso were doing through an organisation called 'The Science Assembly' who were doing a talk at my university. The work they were doing to save the bear sounded amazing and exactly the kind of thing I wanted to help with and so I got in touch.

Pettorano sul Gizio, the town that the other volunteers and I stayed in was beautiful; based amongst the mountains with stunning views and amazing wildlife. We got to know each other, the kind staff of the Monte Genzana Alto Gizio Nature Reserve and the local citizens and went on plenty of hikes to see the surrounding area and all the beauty!

We learned about the organisation and got involved with the work of Salviamo l'Orso and the Nature Reserve as much as we could. We helped to set up camera traps in the reserve, changed the memory cards every week and recorded the wildlife they captured. This was interesting as we never knew what we might see when we played the footage back and

we always hoped to see a bear! Some of the nicest footage I remember us catching was of the wolves in the area, lots of wandering wild boars and curious deer and a family of badgers that kept turning up by one of the cameras that became known as 'badger cam'.



Photograph courtesy of Francesco Culicelli

A main part of our volunteering was assisting with installing and maintaining electric fences for people who needed livestock and crops protecting from the bear. This was a very important part of the 'Genzana Bear Smart Community Project' and the 'A Passage for the Bear Project' which aims to prevent human bear conflicts as much as possible.

This year AISPA supported the second project with a generous donation with the aim to protect the bears providing road signs to try and avoid wildlife-vehicle collisions; provide information to the public and organise events and talks to spread awareness and educate the public about this critically endangered species of bear.