

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

Report of the actions performed in 2017

1. Preserve Marsican brown bears by supporting their natural expansion to peripheral areas of their home range

This action aims at the enhancement of the environmental quality of the wildlife corridors between the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park (ALMNP) and the Sirente Velino Regional Park (SVRP), and between the ALMNP and the Majella National Park (MNP). Some environmental criticalities, such as infrastructures, human disturbance, and lack of food sources, affect these green connection areas. Before applying for Patagonia's grant, preparatory ground monitoring brought to a punctual identification of the wildlife corridors, abandoned fruit trees to trim, and underpasses to restore. The project areas are:

- A. Pass of Carrito, Lingotti Mountains, Mount Luparo, Mount La Selva (ALMNP-SVRP) in the municipal territories of Anversa degli Abruzzi, Ortona dei Marsi, Cocullo, Goriano Sicoli and Prezza.
- B. Pettorano sul Gizio, Rocca Pia (ALMNP-MNP).

2. Enhance the quality of the habitat to increase the presence of Marsican brown bears outside National Parks and promote their population growth

This action is very ambitious and it is supporting some ongoing natural trends in the bear population. The areas in which we have operated are small but significant for the bear distribution. To enhance their environmental suitability to promote the spillover of the Marsican brown bear and its capacity to reclaim lands and extend its population, Salviamo l'Orso volunteers pruned 120 wild or abandoned fruit trees to increase their production and consequently food sources for the bear. This action was carried out in autumn 2016 (November 18th-23rd), spring 2017 (March 16th-18th and April 28th-30th) before blossom, and autumn 2017 (November 24th-25th). Species of interest are *Malus sylvestris*, *Pyrus pyraster*, *Prunus mahaleb*, *Prunus avium*, *Sorbus aria*, *Sorbus domestica*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Ribes uva-crispa*, *Rubus idaea*, *Rosa canina*, *Cornus mas*, *Rhamnus alpinus*.

In Pettorano sul Gizio Salviamo l'Orso carried out the pruning interventions in agreement with the Monte Genzana Alto Gizio Nature Reserve (MGAGNR), while in the area of Mount Luparo they operated further to formal authorization from the SVRP authority.



Ph. 1 – Pruning at Mount Luparo



Ph. 2 – Group photo after pruning in the Monte Genzana Nature Reserve



Ph. 3 – Pruning in the Monte Genzana Nature Reserve



Ph. 4 – Pruned apple trees

3. Recover and maintain two underpasses, which are fundamental to guarantee safe wildlife passages across State Road 17

Recovery of underpasses in the ALMNP-MNP wildlife corridor was extremely successful and went beyond our plan, as three passageways were recovered, two in the municipal territory of Rocca Pia and one in the territory of Pettorano sul Gizio, where another underpass was identified for further recovery. The intervention took two working days in the summer time, when clearing them of hindering vegetation and waste was necessary to promote their use and prevent wildlife-vehicle collisions. It was carried out before the red deer rut and the period bears fatten before dormancy, when the risk of roadkill is higher. Trail cameras proved the use of these underpasses by wildlife (red deer, roe deer and wolves in particular).



Ph. 5 – First underpass



Ph. 6 – Second underpass



Ph. 7 – Third underpass



Ph. 8 – A wolf using the underpass (courtesy of MGAGNR)

4. Monitor the presence of bears through long-distance observations and trail cameras

This action was fundamental to measure the project effectiveness and to collect genetic samples and evidences of the bear population trends outside National Parks, and it is also a part of the guidelines (Action D2) of PATOM (Action Plan for the Protection of the Marsican Bear). Bear presence in wildlife corridor A is regularly monitored by the zoologists of the MGAGNR and the MNP by trail cameras and radio collar tracking, as a female bear is collared and they can follow her movements through this wildlife connection area. Regular monitoring of the wildlife corridor ALMNP-SVRP led to the detection of 5 bear scats and 2 tufts of bear hairs on a barbed wire.

Monitoring activities in the area of Anversa degli Abruzzi-Cocullo were carried out in agreement with the Gole del Sagittario Nature Reserve (GSNR).



Ph.9 - Bear scat in August 2017



Ph. 10 - Setting a trail camera

5. Build a positive relationship man-bear-land

Local communities were involved in pruning actions, which led them to rediscovering abandoned orchards or native cultivars that are the leftovers of the agricultural traditions of the place. On June 4th 2017, a meeting was held in Anversa degli Abruzzi, a village in between both study areas, to raise people's awareness about the importance of wildlife corridors and their environmental enhancement for the bear survival.

6. Financial Report

In October 2016, Salviamo l'Orso received a **6,000 USD** from Patagonia & Tides. The table below shows how the association spent that funding.

Expenditure items	Expended budget (USD)
Extendable bush cutter with components for fruit trees pruning	1,597.61
Pruning equipment (gloves, fuel for cutter, saws, etc.)	118.71
Garmin GPSMAP 64S	292.13
Transports (fuel and highway tolls)	2,929.69
Binoculars	1,130.73
Total	6,068.87

Exchange Rate: 1 Euro = 1.09 USD

Date of Exchange Rate: October 14, 2016