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Seminar-Dialogue  
with DG Environment

Partnerships for biodiversity:  
European policies and the  
role of Protected Areas

organised by:



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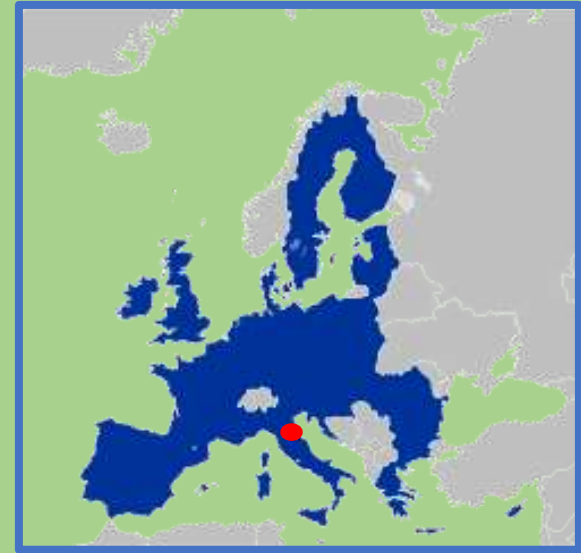
ENV



Ente Parchi e Biodiversità  
**Romagna**



Parco regionale della  
**Vena del Gesso**  
**Romagnola**



# Natura 2000 management in regional parks: challenges, needs and successes in Emilia- Romagna, Italy

Massimiliano Costa

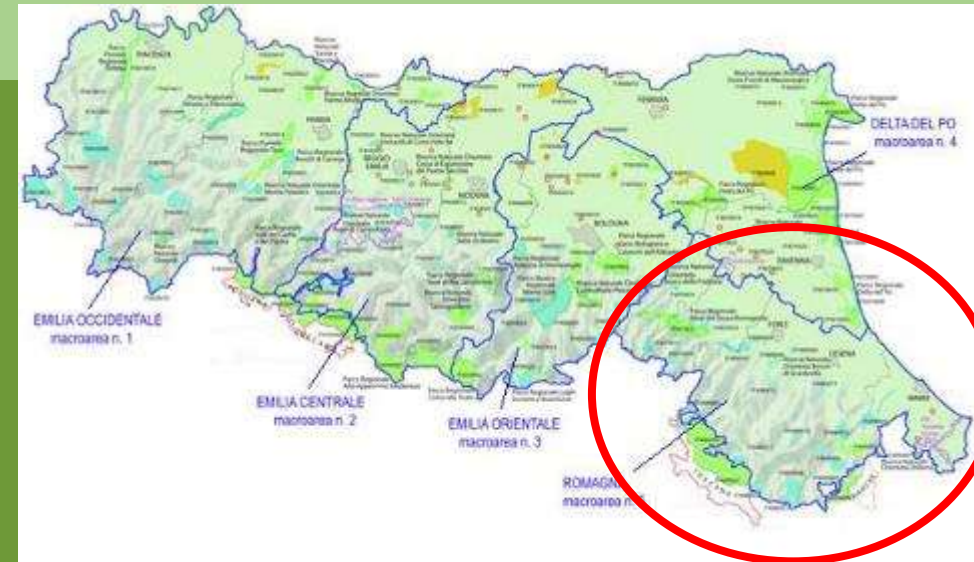


- **Ente Parchi e Biodiversità-Romagna (Management Body of Parks and Biodiversity-Romagna)** is a public body, established by *Regione Emilia-Romagna* in 2011, to manage the protected areas and Natura 2000 sites in the south-eastern part of Padana Valley and the eastern part of Tosco-Emiliano Apennines, the so-called “Romagna”.



## We manage:

- one Regional Natural Park;
- three Regional Natural Reserves;
- one Protected Landscape;
- two Ecological Restructuring Areas;
- 13 Sites of Community Importance (Dir. 92/43/EEC «Habitat»);
- 4 Special Protection Areas (Dir. 2009/147/EC «Birds»).



We are also responsible for the Environment Education Centre of Romagna and for the conservation of biodiversity in the entire subregional territory.



# Natural Park Vena del Gesso Romagnola



Parco regionale della  
**Vena del Gesso  
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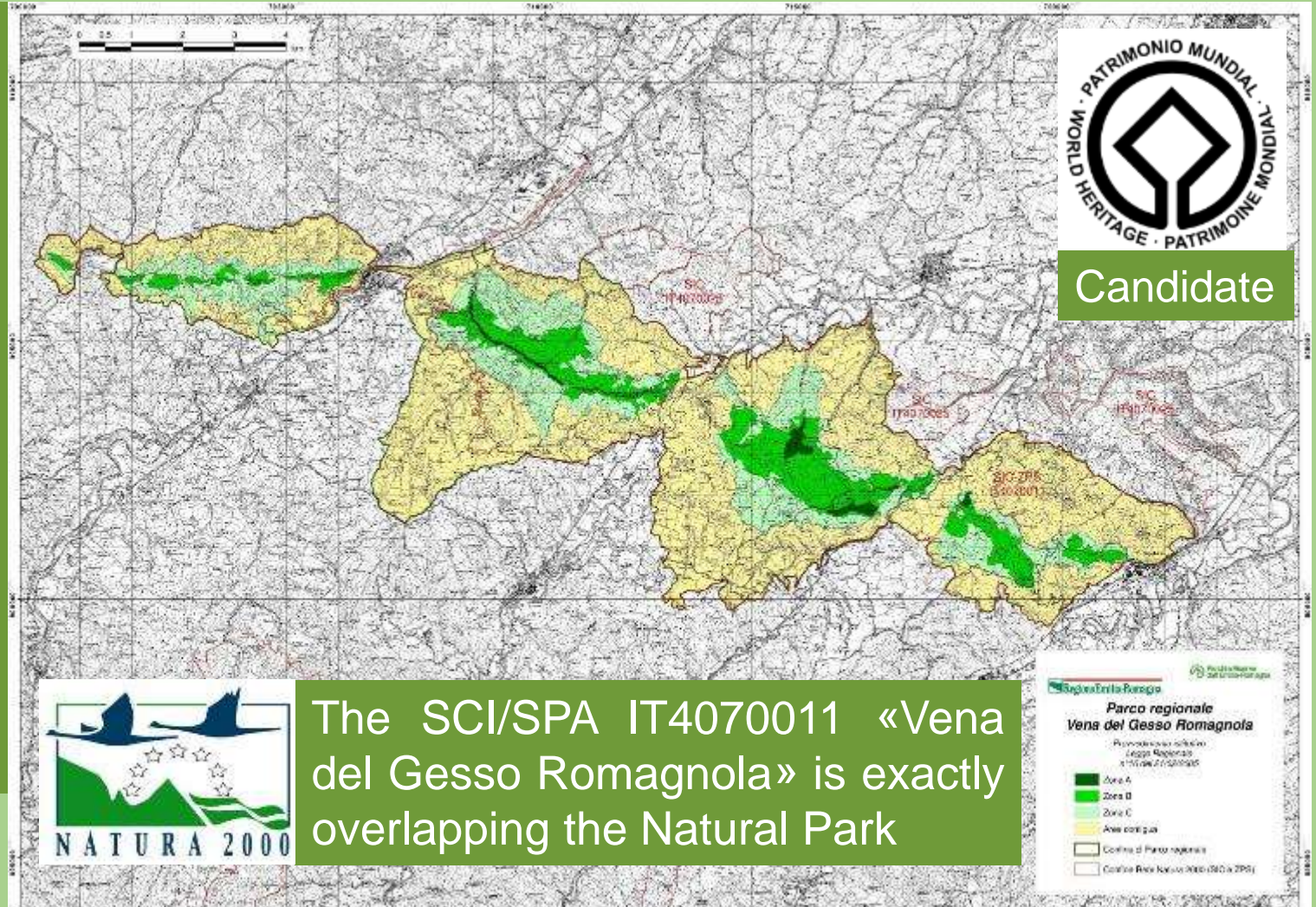
6.000 hectares (60 Km<sup>2</sup>)

25 Km long

Altitude 100 – 515 m.

Medium quote of the  
gypsum steep slopes  
400 m.

There are more than 220  
caves with a total length  
of more than 40 Km.



The SCI/SPA IT4070011 «Vena del Gesso Romagnola» is exactly overlapping the Natural Park

# Who I am



I am a field biologist, ornithologist and bird-ringer.

In 1995-1997 I was in the six persons group “creating” Natura 2000 in Emilia-Romagna, within the “Bioitaly” project, financed by the European Union to Italy for establishing Natura 2000 at national level.

In 2000-2015 I was the responsible of the “Park office” of the Province of Ravenna (Emilia-Romagna), coordinating the natural Parks, managing Natural Reserves and Natura 2000 sites.

Since 2009 I am the director of the Natural Park Vena del Gesso Romagnola and since 2013 also of the Management Body of Parks and Biodiversity-Romagna (managing the protected areas and Natura 2000 sites of the provinces of Bologna (part), Ravenna (part), Forlì-Cesena and Rimini).





# Financing



LIFE projects are an excellent financial instrument for extraordinary conservation interventions, but how could we finance ordinary activities, the daily activities foreseen by the management plans? And the monitoring?

Finally, some dedicated funding was allocated by the Region since 2018 also for Natura 2000, but:

- 16,000 € for each Natura 2000 site;
- 50,000 € for each Natural Reserve;
- 250,000 € each Natural Park.

The State and the Region are urging the use of RDP funds. But this type of financing is not really suitable for our conservation purposes.



# Financing



RDP funds are managed by public bodies dealing with agriculture, not with nature conservation and they have too strict enforcement regulations to adapt to nature conservation.

Not only that, during the last programming, no farmer used the funds of the “environment axis” in our Region, for fear of finding himself a ban on reconversion. Even during previous programming, the successes in terms of nature conservation were very few.

Furthermore, the CAP finances the maintenance of arable land (I really do not understand the public interest for this economic support) and, to obtain these funds, farmers resume plowing land that has been abandoned for years, even in Natura 2000 sites. The CAP regulation prohibits converting lawns classified as 92/43/EEC habitats, but the others are not less important, e.g. for the landscape. We lost at least 50 hectares of semi-natural meadows because of this in the last years.

**If the 5 park manager Bodies in Emilia-Romagna had the opportunity to use directly even only the tenth part of the € 1,300,000,000 of the CAP of the last 7 years ...**

# Decision-making level



According to the Regional Law, our steering committee is made by mayors. After the administrative reorganization and the partial abolition of the Provinces, the role of mayors in Italy has grown considerably.

But, they have a local point of view, they cannot (neither have to) have the right point of view about nature conservation and Natura 2000 management at sub-regional level.

They are rightly focused on tourism development, events, productive activities.

A few weeks ago the Italian Ministry of the Environment complained that the parks spend their money only in events and promotion and not in nature conservation. He accused the directors of this, but if the executive committees continue to be made up of mayors of mountain villages of 1,000 inhabitants, it will never change.

**There should be European or national indications about the level of the political control for the public authorities managing Natura 2000.**



# Staff



We are just four employees (two biologists, one geologist, one forester) and two external employees (one biologist, one park guard) to do everything. The planned staff is 15 persons (which would be, however few).

Most of the directors are lawyers, engineers, architects. Full respect for these professions, but they hardly have the right approach to nature conservation.

**We need European guidelines on how the managing bodies of the Natura 2000 network should be structured.**

# Management Plan and Conservation measures



We have developed the management plan and the conservation measures with RDP funds in 2013.

However, we do not have funds to implement the ordinary activities of the management plan.

Conservation measures are a very important tool. They have become a specific regulation of the Park, in this way the rules are more strong and more respected.

They are divided into incentives and prescriptions. However, it has not been possible to apply incentives to the RDP until now.

Moreover, the Region has recently changed the law and has taken the approval of the measures to itself. By deleting many important rules ...



# Management Plan and Conservation measures



The management plan in itself is not enough: the SCI/SPA IT4070001 “Punte Alberete, Valle Mandriole” was the most important freshwater wetland in Italy before the manager (Delta del Po Natural Park) and the owners (Municipality of Ravenna, Region Emilia-Romagna) abandoned it, despite having approved a management plan, which was ignored.

This caused a total environmental disaster, due to the lack of water for over 10 years, with the extinction of hundreds of species (including many of Community interest), loss of protected habitats (3150, 7210\*) and collapse of many others (3130, 3170\*, 91F0, 92A0).



# Impact assessment



After 20 years dealing with impact assessment in Natura 2000 sites, I can say that it is a formidable tool.

We make now about 200 i.a. per year and we say “no” just in one or two cases every year, but we have the possibility to give a lot of prescriptions, change the projects, move them to other areas...guaranteeing the nature conservation and keeping a good relation with local people.

In a part of our territory the Municipality, instead of our Body, should make the impact assessments (because of a “bug” of the Regional Law), but they are not doing them!!!



# Impact assessment



Sometimes the prescriptions give extraordinary results...

There is a huge quarry in the Natura 2000 sites and a few years ago they asked us to make a landfill of sterile material on a lawn with habitat 6210\*, we have prescribed to use the sterile to partially close part of the kilometres of quarry tunnels, no longer used, to encourage wintering of bats. Now, in those tunnels, over 18,000 common bent-wing bats (*Miniopterus schreibersii*) winter, which I believe is one of the most important colonies in Europe.



*Miniopterus schreibersii*

# Monitoring



We don't have specific funds for monitoring.

The regional law gives monitoring to the Region itself. However, the Region can not organize more than one comprehensive campaign every five years. Constant monitoring by managers, coordinated by the Region, would be more effective.

We are carrying on some monitoring activities, with our own sources (human, financial), but I think we are the only Body doing it at regional level.

*Wolf*

*Bats*

*CES bird ringing program*

*Raptors (peregrine falcon, short-toed eagle, honey buzzard, eagle owl)*

*Habitat 8310 Caves*



# Conservation status of habitats and species



The conservation status of the 17 habitats of the directive 92/43/EEC annex I is good. The same is for the only plant species of the annex II and for almost all the 25 animal species of the directive 92/43/EEC and the 29 of the directive 09/147/EU.

*Canis lupus*



6110\* The vegetation of gypsum rocks (*Alyso-sedion albi*)



*Himantoglossum adriaticum*

8210 The chasmophytic vegetation of cave entrances



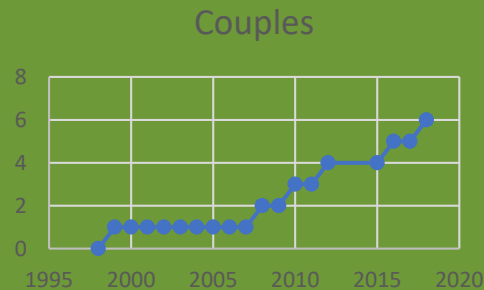
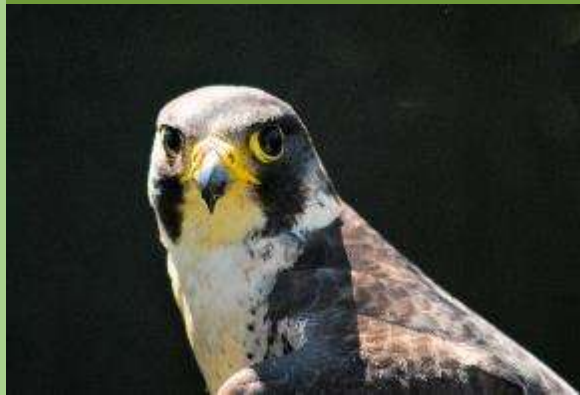


# Conservation status of habitats and species



Some species are increasing, thanks to the conservation measures and the management; some species are in strong decline and we are investigating and studying to find the causes of this population decrease.

*Falco peregrinus*



*Bubo bubo*



# LIFE Projects



We concluded in 2016 the **LIFE08 NAT/IT/000369-GYPSUM** (conservation of 8310 caves, 6110\* and 8210 slope vegetations; bats). Total budget: 1,962,983.00 €

We are now carrying on two LIFE projects:

**LIFE14 NAT/IT/000209-EREMITA** (conservation of some insects). Total budget: 2,126,987.00 €

**LIFE 16 NAT/IT/000245 – LIFE 4 OAKFORESTS** (conservation of 91AA\* white oak forests). Total budget: 7,980,586.00 € (as coordinating beneficiary)



91AA\* Oak forest

# Other projects with European funding



In the last years we also used EU funds from other financial instruments for nature conservation projects:

**Interreg Slovenia-Italy: Climaparks** (evaluation of the impact of climate change on bats and passerines)

**Interreg Slovenia-Italy: Sigma2** (reduction of the impact of chemistry in agriculture on the natural heritage)

**Interreg Adriatic-Ionian: Adriaticaves** (conservation of caves and reduction of the impact of tourism in caves)

**RDP funds: Management Plan and Conservation Measures**

**RDP funds (ex-Leader): Prevention of damage caused by wildlife to agriculture** (mitigation of damage by wolf, wild boar and roe deer on flocks and crops)

And also for other activities:

RDP funds (ex-Leader): setting of an archaeological museum in a XIV century castle

RDP funds: restoring of a XVI century building (future geological museum)

RDP funds (ex-Leader): organization of international speleological congress (three times)

ERDF: setting of new tourist and cultural services in the Park





# Natural park and Natura 2000 site interaction



Based on what we are experiencing in Emilia-Romagna, the combination of natural parks/reserves-Natura 2000 sites is a winning solution.

We have more funds of the Park for:

- conservation;
- monitoring;
- management;
- prevention;
- control;
- information;
- awareness.



The problem is that we have not enough funds to do all these activities in the Natura 2000 sites out of parks and reserves.

# Natural park and Natura 2000 site interaction



We are managing also the sites out of the Park and we can see the difference, also in terms of attention from citizens and other institutions: the presence of the Park allows funds and greater attention to the included Natura 2000 site.

We do some didactic and awareness activities within the Center for Environmental Education, but the Natura 2000 network remains too little known in Italy and, I think, throughout Europe.

**Instead, Natura 2000 is an exceptional strategy, one of the best unifying policies of the European Union, deserving more attention, at this moment, to make a further leap in quality.**



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# Thank you



**Massimiliano Costa**