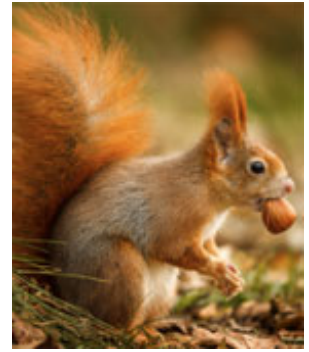




LIFE U-SAVEREDS - Management of grey squirrel in Umbria: conservation of red squirrel and preventing loss of biodiversity in Apennines

LIFE13 BIO/IT/000204



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Project description:

Background

The Umbria region is located in the heart of the Italian peninsula. It is threatened by the presence of the non-native Eastern grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) that has spread since it was accidentally released in the city of Perugia in the early 2000s. The introduction of the grey squirrel in Europe is one of the most well-known and studied cases of invasive alien species (IAS). In Umbria the grey squirrel is linked to several types of human settlements, such as sub-urban areas with a high population density and the city centre. The grey squirrel is not considered a threat by the general public who see its presence in urban and sub-urban parks as positive.

Objectives

The main goal of LIFE U-SAVEREDS is the conservation of the European red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) in Umbria and the biodiversity in the Apennine ecosystem. Another goal is to obtain a wide consensus from the public for management actions. These actions will involve capturing and eliminating grey squirrels, in accordance with animal welfare laws. Further goals include the removal of new grey squirrels by the creation of an 'alien squirrel emergency team' (ASET) on a national level and the production of a regional early warning system protocol.

Expected results: Management:

- Removal of at least 80% of the estimated grey squirrel population in Umbria;
- Restoration of at least two sub-urban red squirrel populations and an increase in density of populations in the areas where the species is disappearing due to the presence of the grey squirrel;
- A GIS-based map showing the detailed distribution of grey squirrels and their estimated population size in Umbria;
- A dynamic map that explains the trend of removal operations; and the
- Removal of a potential public health issue posed by grey squirrel: contact with this confident animal, living in high density city areas could lead to an increased risk of disease (e.g. mycosis) in people with weakened immune systems.

Awareness and communication:

- Raising public awareness regarding the role of the native red squirrel in forest ecosystems and the threats posed by the grey squirrel to biodiversity; and
- Raising awareness on pet trade issues.

Dissemination:

- Producing a best practice tool for the early warning system and rapid response to new incursions by IAS;
- Providing technical alternatives to the use of non-selective systems for the control of rodents in urban areas, thus reducing the impact on non-target species and environmental contamination;
- The ASET will put the appropriate actions in place to be able to act rapidly regarding new non-native squirrels in Italy;
- Creation of advanced communication and management strategies that can be applied to other IAS at local and national level.

Results

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Biodiversity issues - Invasive species
Species - Mammals

Keywords

introduction of animal species, nature conservation, mountainous area

Natura 2000 sites

Not applicable

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale
Type of organisation	Research institution
Description	ISPRA was founded in 2000. It performs the duties of the former agency for environmental protection and the national Institute for wildlife. As such, it is in charge of the management and conservation of wildlife and provides mandatory advice on these topics according to national laws.
Partners	REGUM(Regione Umbria), Italy LEGAMBU(Legambiente Umbria), Italy ARPLAZIO(Regione Lazio - Agenzia Regionale Parchi), Italy COMPE(Comune di Perugia), Italy IOIKOS(Istituto OIKOS srl), Italy IZSUM(Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Umbria e delle Marche), Italy

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE13 BIO/IT/000204
Duration	01-OCT-2014 to 01-OCT -2018
Total budget	1,433,241.00 €
EU contribution	716,620.00 €
Project location	Umbria(Italia),Lazio(Italia)

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