



LIFE16 NAT/SI/000644

Newsletter

LIFE FOR LASCA

N. 13/2021

Like us at the Ticino Park, our partner FRIS organized a photo contest. In issue 8 of the newsletter we showed some of the incredible photographs participating in the Slovenian contest «Motives Natura 2000». Well, a few weeks ago the winners were announced:

- 1st PLACE «Kingfisher with prey» by Tadej Vučko
- 2nd PLACE: «On alert» by Peter Balantič
- 3rd PLACE: «Osprey» by Maja Mavrič

The three works represent fauna species, in particular birds, closely linked to aquatic environments, which feed on fish. The subjects immortalized by the talented photographers are in fact the Kingfisher and the Osprey. You can see the complete catalog of photographs of the Slovenian competition at the link: <https://www.lifeforlasca.eu/gallery/album/fotografski-natecaj/>.

«Kingfisher with prey» di Tadej Vučko



«On alert» di Peter Balantič



«Osprey» di Maja Mavrič



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From Tiber to Ticino

In April, the technicians of the Ticino Park went to the Trasimeno Ichthyogenic Center (PG) to recover about 500 adult lasca specimens. These fishes are currently housed in the institution's hatchery, located in La Fagiana in Pontevecchio di Magenta (MI). In the near future, they will be transferred to the FRIS which will use them as breeding stock in captive breeding activities. The transfer have been made possible by a network activated with the research team lead by Dr. Lorenzoni (Department of Chemistry, Biology and Biotechnology of the University of Perugia). The fishes housed at the Trasimeno Ichthyogenic Center were recovered from tributaries of the Tiber river, where the species is allochthonous, by the team of University of Perugia. These lasca specimens found to be genetically compatible with those present in the hydrographic network of the Soča River, have been delivered to the Ticino Park so they can be used later for the restocking of FRIS as part of the LIFE for LASCA project in Slovenia.

Trasimeno Ichthyogenic Center – Photo Marco Valenti



Lasca transfer– Photo Marco Primavesi



Transferred Lasca specimens in La Fagiana - Photo Marco Valenti

The Trasimeno Ichthyogenic Center

The regional Ichthyogenic Center, managed by the Umbria Region, located in Sant'Arcangelo on the shores of Trasimeno is dedicated to breeding mainly pike, carp and tench. The fish material produced in the plant is mainly used for the restocking programs in Lake Trasimeno. The plant is powered by water from the lake, pumped into a concrete loading tank and distributed by this by gravity both in the breeding ground tanks and in the hatchery. The plant is divided into two distinct sectors: a covered hatchery and an external sector with ground tanks used for the breeders and the growth of the young fish. In the center there is also an educational path for schools.

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Abundant and declining species

We saw in the last newsletter how the Lasca (*Protochondrostoma genei*) is in trouble in Slovenia, where it is indigenous, but it is expanding in the Apennines, where it is allochthonous. In Europe, also the Nase (*Chondrostoma nasus*), can find itself in similar situations of critical survival in some areas or as an alien species present in abundance in others territories here it should be eradicated to save other endemic species (as happens in the Soča river basin in Slovenia in the context of our project). It is clear that the introduction of a species in an environment to which it is naturally alien always involves serious imbalances.



Recovery activity of the Nase in Slovenia – Photo FRIS

About the Nase...

In Switzerland *C. nasus*, where it is present as a native species, has shown a massive numerical decrease in various places and numerous local extinctions, being a cyprinid that exploits highly specialized ecological niches and a migratory fish that encounters obstacles during its movements. In Germany, genetic studies on the nase have been carried out in the Rhine river in order to promote conservation programs through reintroductions and restocking. The species was one of the most common in European rivers and its decline due to human activities was easily seen. Since the quality of the reproductive substrate is an important factor influencing the development of larvae, a cleansing of the bottom has also been promoted in Germany to increase the success rate in reproduction. In Poland, researchers studied the hormonal stimulus needed for captive breeding. In the south of France, on the other hand, it has been analyzed how the appearance of the nase as exotic species has changed the structure of the community of parasites present on the endemic species of the Durance and Ardèche rivers.

Nase containment activities in Slovenia

Acting on threats is essential for the success of a reintroduction / restocking project. The releases of a declining or locally extinct species would be useless if they did not occur as a result of studies on the causes of the numerical decrease / extinction and the implementation of actions to counter these threats. In this case, freeing Lasca where Nase abound (allochthonous species competing with Lasca) would lead to the death of most of the released fishes; just as releasing a migratory species without reducing the obstacles to its movement (dams and therefore building fish passages), would reduce the success of repopulation and the efforts upstream.

In Slovenia, therefore, Nases are captured in sites where competition with the Lasca jeopardizes the survival of the target species. This is done both by the project staff and through the collaboration of sport fishermen and the organization of fishing competitions even for the little ones.

In March, the FRIS, in collaboration with the local fishing associations RD Ajdovščina and RD Renče, began to remove the Nase in the tributaries of the Vipava River, on the Močilnik, Vrtojba and Vogršček streams. 299 specimens were captured in these campaigns.



Recovery activity of the Nase in Slovenia – Photo FRIS