

Newsletter LIFE FOR LASCA

N. 08/2021

As you know by now, the LIFE for LASCA LIFE16 NAT / SI / 000644 project sees the collaboration of the Lombard Park of the Ticino Valley with the FRIS, Fisheries Research Institute of Slovenia. A few months ago we first published the finalists and then the winners of the "Parco in rete" contest for schools and of the "Parco Ticino Wild" photo contest, organized by the Park for this project. On the dedicated pages on the institution's website, you will find complete catalogs of the participants' artistic and photographic works (https://ente.parcoticino.it/concorso-fotografico-parco-ticino-wild/;

https://ente.parcoticino.it/life-for-lasca-concorso-per-scuole-parco-in-rete/).

Two similar competitions were also held in Slovenia to bring the population closer to the topic of native fish fauna and nature conservation. Below we report the news regarding these contests.

Contest "Richness of Natura 2000"

On 17 December 2020, the commission of the Slovenian partner FRIS met to

evaluate the works received. All the designs presented were exceptional. The first three classified are as follow:

1. PLACE: Ema Modrijan, OŠ Milojke Štrukelj Nova Gorica

2. PLACE: Jona Šturbej, OŠ Dornberk

3. PLACE: Erik Romare, OŠ Dornberk

The complete gallery is available at the link https://lifeforlasca.eu/galle ry/album/likovni-natecal/



Contest "Motives of Natura 2000"

On December 31, 2020, the FRIS photo contest ended. 101 photos were presented that now compete for rich prizes, in fact in these days the commission will have to evaluate the shots, select the best ones who will take part in an exhibition and announce the first 3 classified. Visit the following link to capture the beauty of Slovenian lands frozen in the photographs of the contest and discover the winners https://lifeforlasca.eu/gallery/album/fotografski-natecaj/.

There are numerous shots of wild animals representative of the wild nature that can be found in Slovenia such as eagles, bears, roe deer, newts and partridges. The uncontaminated mountain landscapes and aquatic environments present in the Natura 2000 network site, object of the reintroduction of the Lasca, were also very much represented.

These photos show the incredible variety of environment, animal and plant species that make up the biodiversity of Slovenia, at short distance from our country.



Riverbed of Mostnica in autumn-Photo Nina Lozej



LIF<mark>EE<mark>EL</mark></mark>

As mentioned in the last issue of the newsletter, the LIFEEL LIFE19 NAT / IT / 000851 is being launched: a project, of which the Ticino Park is a partner, which focuses on the conservation of the European eel.

The European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) has a long and complex life cycle (about 15 years) characterized by four stages of metamorphosis. They are born as tiny larvae called *leptocephalus* and perform the transoceanic migration from the Sargasso Sea, the marine area where eels reproduce, to the continental areas where the larvae transform into *glass eels*, so called because they are transparent. In this stage they aggregate in the estuaries of the rivers and move towards the fresh waters where, growing up, they pass to the next stage of *yellow eels*, so named by the color of the belly. The last metamorphosis occurs with sexual maturity when the *silver eels*, a name that always derives from the changed color of the belly, begin the journey back to the Sargasso Sea to reproduce and conclude the cycle. This complexity makes the eel extremely difficult to study and monitor, so many details remain elusive, particularly concerning the remote spawning in the Sargasso Sea and larval feeding.

T<mark>he</mark> eel situation

The European eel population shows a critical situation with a decrease of 99% from the late 1980s to today. The species is listed as "Critically Endangered" on the IUCN Red List; it is included in the European Red List of freshwater fish by Freyhof and Brooks (2011); it is protected by Regulation CE1100 / 2007 through the adoption by the Member States of a dedicated management plan; In 2018, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) adopted on a multiannual basis a management plan for eels in the Mediterranean Sea.

This fish is threatened by factors that are partly global (such as climate change) and partly local. The main ones are:

- pressure from fishing and aquaculture (the high commercial value of its meat makes eel a sought-after popular resource);
- fragmentation of internal migration routes and reduction of the flow of water courses that prevent movement towards rivers;
 - mortality due to turbines of hydroelectric plants without downstream bypass, for specimens that go down to the sea;
 - scarcity of water, due to extraction for irrigation and the production of hydroelectric energy;
- illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing on glass eels;
- widespread lack of information, involvement of the public and interested parties in the conservation of the species.

LIFEEEL Area

The Italian project area includes the Po River basin, the largest Italian watershed with the largest delta in the Adriatic, where the water surface suitable for eel can be quantified in about 20,000 sqkm (including only the main hydrographic network).

LIFEEEL Purpose

Ensure concrete support for the long-term conservation of the eel population in the Adriatic, through the achievement of the following objectives:

- increased survival through the release of "best" silver eels, thanks to a
 protocol to define the level of argentinization and monitoring with acoustic
 signals in order to reduce mortality due to fishing and aquaculture as close
 to zero;
- obtaining specimens of glass eel through artificial reproduction to be used for releases into nature;
- restoration of access to vocational areas for the growth of the species in fresh waters, so that youngs and adults can move freely within the hydrographic network until sexual maturity. The goal will be achieved through the construction of specific structures for the passage of glass eels;
- reduction of the lethal impact of turbines in hydroelectric plants thanks to a
 demonstrative installation on the Tresa River of a deterrent device that
 prevents the entry into the turbines of silver eels migrating downstream,
 and thanks to the establishment of guidelines for hydroelectric producers
 present in the project area;
- information, awareness and involvement of stakeholders and population. the public The consent and the participation of interested parties play a key role in the correct conservation action.



Material produced with the contribution of the LIFE financial instrument of the European Commission

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