

## Tourism and conservation on private land in Italy

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Conservation on private land is one important component of global efforts to improve landscape-scale connectivity, so as to counter increasing threats to biological diversity. Such threats include habitat clearance and fragmentation, poaching and rare-species trafficking, and climate change (Buckley 2008). Incentives, mechanisms and outcomes of conservation on private land differ greatly between countries. In some regions, tourism provides a significant source of funding and political support (Buckley 2009a, Buckley 2009b). Conservation-oriented non-government organisations (NGO's) have been particularly active in leading such initiatives in both developing and developed nations. International NGO's are best known, but local NGO's have also played a major role in some countries.

Here we introduce four such organisations which appear to have played a successful part in using tourism to promote conservation on private land in Italy. These are: LIPU (2010), the Italian League for Bird Protection, Legambiente (2010), an Italian association for the environment, WWF Italy (2010), part of the global World Wide Fund for Nature, and Fattorie del Panda (2010), a network of holiday farms. The information presented below is publicly available (in Italian) on the websites and marketing materials of the organisations concerned.

Italy has biodiversity worth conserving. Within Europe for example, it has the second highest number of native higher plant species (after Spain). One tenth of its animal species, and 13% of its plant species, are endemic. It also has populations of a number of rare bird and mammal species. As in most of the Old World, Italy has a long history of human civilisation and land use. It does not have large wilderness areas as in the New World, but a mosaic of land managed for a variety of purposes. Therefore, as elsewhere in Europe, private land is particularly important for biodiversity conservation.

We have four important conservation-oriented non-government organisations (NGO's):

- LIPU focuses on the conservation of bird species. It manages 47 reserves located in various parts of the country which are strategically significant for bird migration and breeding. Most of these reserves are wetlands and most, but not all, are on private land. They support populations of waders and waterbirds such as herons and egrets, and the rare Eurasian Bittern which is a birdwatcher's trophy species.
- Legambiente is an umbrella association of over a thousand smaller local environmental groups throughout Italy, first formed in 1980. Its principal activity is lobbying, but it also manages 55 small reserves spread across 10 regions and totalling 10,000 ha in area. Most of these reserves are targeted for the conservation of remnant wild populations of particular rare and endemic plant species, which go under common names such as carnations and catchflies, stonecrops and spurges, naked ladies and the Venus' looking-glass orchid. Legambiente has also sought external project funding on occasion for conservation of wolf, bear and chamois in mountain areas.
- WWF manages more than 100 reserves in Italy, totaling around 30,000 ha and including both private and public lands. The majority are intended to contribute to conservation of rare or endangered plant and animal species. Some of the better-known species include goshawks and golden eagles, rare frogs and newts, woodpeckers and wanderer butterflies, orchids and

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heathers, and less conspicuous but equally important species such as rare beetles and lichens.

- Fattorie del Panda is a network of 72 private holiday farms which are managed directly by the farm landowners. The network was established in 2003 through an agreement between WWF Italy, the national parks federation Federparchi, and the farm-tourism promotion organisation Agritur. It is essentially an Italian equivalent of the better-known French association Gites Panda. Its main aims are to involve farmers and educate farm tourists about biodiversity conservation. Many of the farms are adjacent to reserves.

For each of these four organizations, the basic mechanism is an agreement between the NGO and the private landowner. This may include a land-tenure component which would be known in Anglophone legal systems as a covenant, an easement, or a voluntary conservation agreement. Alternatively or additionally, it may include a management agreement, under which the NGO carries out on-ground conservation management on the land concerned.

Each of these organizations makes significant contributions to conservation on private land in Italy. The total area is small, but a number of rare and endemic species are involved. Each also employs tourism as one of its tools, both for funding and for education, but not at all the sites it manages. Since many of these arrangements are at a small and local scale and there are also privacy considerations, there are as yet no readily available data on the detailed role of tourism at each individual property. To obtain such data would require a property-by-property survey. This would be a valuable exercise for future research.

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