Conservation of the Corsican-Sardinian Deer (Cervus elaphus corsicanus) in Sardinia and Corsica
The Corsican-Sardinian Deer belongs to the Cervidae family and the Cervus genre, which includes nine species distributed throughout Europe, North America and a large portion of the Asiatic continent as well as in more limited distribution zones in Northern Africa.

The Corsican-Sardinian Deer is one of the subspecies of the Red European Deer (Cervus elaphus). Recent genetic studies suggest that the ancestors of the current specimens are of Eastern European origin, introduced to Sardinia at least 3,500 years ago by the first human colonisations, and that they adapted to the conditions of the island by developing a smaller size/ morphology.

We find signs of its presence in Sardinia during the Nuragic Era and reliable elements attesting to its presence in Corsica in the 5th century A.D. It disappeared from Corsica at the end of the 1960’s due to significant environmental encroachment, unregulated hunting and intensive poaching. It suffered almost the same fate in Sardinia, with three core populations maintained in the natural state, enabling the subsequent launch a programme of Corsican-Sardinian cooperation between the Regional Natural Park of Corsica and its Sardinian equivalents (azienda forestale) in order to reintroduce the subspecies to the island in 1985.

Twelve releases were organised in Corsica between 1998 and 2014, with more than 250 deer freed into the natural habitat. Since the end of the 1980’s, ten new populations have been reintroduced into Sardinia.

The current population in Corsica is estimated at a minimum of 1,000 deer. The actions planned by the programme will therefore enable cross-breeding, which is indispensable for the subspecies, as well as the increase in population and the expansion of the distribution areas.

The total deer population in Sardinia is estimated at over 8,000 animals concentrated mainly in the south of the Island; the LIFE programme plans to reintroduce deer in other territories.
Presentation of Natura 2000 sites selected for the project, where the programme’s actions will take place, 5 sites in Sardinia and 3 in Corsica.

The Gulf of Orosei S.C.I. (ITB020014)

The S.C.I. (28,941 ha) is located in the northeast region of Sardinia. It consists of approximately 40 km of cliffs of calcareous nature, interrupted by numerous small beaches called “codulas”. The S.C.I. is characterised by woods of Quercus ilex with Juniperus ssp. The shrub stratum is characterized by Pistacia lentiscus, Rhamnus alaternus, Phillyrea latifolia, Erica arborea and Arbutus unedo. From birds (e.g. the Aquila chrysaetos, Calonectris diomedea, Circus aeruginosus, Falco eleonorae, and Falco naumanni), to mammals (e.g. the Ovis gmelini musimon, Rhinolophus hipposideros, and Rhinolophus ferrumequinum), to amphibians (e.g. the Speleomantes supramontis, and Discoglossus sardus) to reptiles (e.g. the Emys orbiculare and Euleptes europaeus), several important species inhabit the S.C.I.

S.C.I.
Supramonte di Oliena,
Orgosolo e Urzulei
Su Sercone
(ITB022212)

The S.C.I. (23,487 ha) is located in the northeast region of Sardinia. It consists of a plateau formed by karst phenomena ranging between 110 and 1,463 mAMSL. The most representative habitats are Holm oak forests and “Rocky calcareous wall with chasmophytic vegetation”. The flora in the region is one of the richest in Sardinia. Three vegetal species are of Community Importance: Ribes sardoum, Brassica insularis, Centranthus amazonum. Sardinia has several endemics in common with Corsica. There are 28 species of animals of Community Importance, including: Speleomantes supramontis, Ovis (orientalis) musimon, Accipiter gentilis arrigonii, and Aquila chrysaetos.
Thanks to its biodiversity and natural worth, the S.C.I. (44,713 ha) has the greatest environmental value in Sardinia. It extends into the island’s largest mountainous region with a series of peaks exceeding 1,800 mAMSL. Many floristic associations bear witness to the close analogies between the flora of this alpine area of Sardinia with that of Corsica’s mountains. The predominant habitats are the “Arborescent matorral with Juniperus spp.”, the “Endemic oro-Mediterranean heaths with gorse” and the forests of Quercus ilex. The importance of the flora with its exclusive endemic species, including: the Festuca mo-risiana, Armeria sardoa subsp genargentea, Herniaria latifolia subsp. litardierei, and Euphrasia genargentea. This S.C.I. contains amphibians exclusive to Sardinia: the Euproctus platycephalus and Speleomantes imperialis. Twelve species of birds listed in Bird Directive 79/409 EEC, Annex I are present in the area.

The Coscione Plateau and Incudine Mountain Range (FR9400582)

The site spans a surface of 11,228 hectares. The plateau is located in the Hyercinian region. The rocks in the area are mainly calc-alkaline granites. An acidic soil spreads over the granitic substratum. Poorly-controlled frequentation of the site by motor vehicles constitutes a serious threat for the habitats in the wetlands and encourages intensive poaching of macrostigma trouts (facilitated access for poachers at the spawning grounds).

Pig breeding practices also currently constitute a problem in the pozzines.

This site constitutes a medium mountain region ensemble, highly Euro-Siberian in appearance (beech, fir, larici pine, alnus cordata, and pozzines). The uneven, hilly relief of the site is characterized by numerous springs, brooks and pozzines.

In addition to its remarkable scenic qualities, this site offers exceptional floristic interest. Numerous endemic species can be found solely within this area, including the Trisetum conradiae and Trisetum gracile. Moreover, the site is home to almost all of the world populations of two plants listed in Annexes II and IV: the Aconitum corsicum and the Herniaria latifolia. Numerous species of mammals listed in Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive can be found at this site: the discoglossus sardus, the great capricorne beetle, the Hermann’s tortoise, the Corsican mouflon, the Corsican-Sardinian deer and the Macrostigma Corsican trout.

The site hosts the largest population of deer on the island, estimated at over 300 animals, reintroduced in 1998 and reinforced in 2002.

The Gennargentu Mountains S.C.I. (ITB021103)

The Mount Arcuentu and Rio Piscinas S.C.I. (ITB040031)
The Rotondo Mountain Range Site (FR9400578)

The site spans a surface of 15,295 Hectares. The site belongs to the “Medium grained Corsican granite” series. Three beautiful mountain valleys grace the region: the Tavignano, the Restonica and the valley of Verghello, of great scenic beauty and biological richness (numerous habitats and species of Community Interest, Annexes I, II and IV). Tourist visits and fires can occasionally cause problems.

This mountain range is home to most of the high-altitude lakes in Corsica. The valleys are densely wooded, composed mainly of oak and beech groves. A dense maquis composed essentially of heather occupies a vast portion of the region.

Numerous species listed in Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive are present on the site: the discoglossus sardus, the great capricorne beetle, the Hermann’s tortoise, the felis silvestris, the gypaetus barbatus and the Corsican-Sardinian deer. The Rotondo mountain range hosts a rich endemic flora (e.g.: Euphorbia corsica encountered on the Campotile plateau), as well as three plants listed in Annex II of the Directive: the Herniaria latifolia, the Euprasia genargentea and the Brassica insularis. The Corsican deer was reintroduced in 2004 and currently has an estimated population of 100 head. A bolstering of the population for genetic cross-breeding purposes will be carried out at this site in 2015/2016.
Sustainable development, Today’s Environmental Challenges

Anthropogenic activities

Energy production, land use, the exhaustion of forestry resources to develop pasture land and fields; these are only a few examples of the human activities that often damage the environment in which they are employed. Among the causes that almost led to the extinction of the Sardinian-Corsican deer was excessive deforestation, which affected the subspecies’ habitat, along with acts of criminal arson that affect Corsica and Sardinia every year. The issues of energy production, waste disposal, land and maritime transport, the environmental impact of industries and factories, the upgrading of buildings and sustainable tourism should also be examined with a view to sustainability and preservation of local species and fauna.

The LIFE “One Deer, Two Islands” programme includes a series of macro-projects, aimed at monitoring and protecting the Corsican-Sardinian deer. Interventions and concrete planning actions are the first step in any project. We then proceed to the verification of results, to dissemination and organizational communication, including by means of the media and the internet. The first results have already been achieved in Sardinia in collaboration with the Corsican Forestry Agency (CFA), the provinces of Ogliastra and Medio Campidano, leading in less than a year to the release in the wild of fifteen deer originating from the Sa Portica enclosure. In Corsica, the Regional Natural Park of Corsica (PNRC), in collaboration with its local partners, the Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (ONCFS) [National Office of Hunting and Wild Game], the Regional Directorate for Environment, Development and Housing (DREAL), the National Forestry Office (ONF), Office de l’Environnement de Corse (OEC) [the Environmental Office of Corsica], the University of Corsica and departmental analysis laboratories, have made it possible to reintroduce 10 deer, originally from the Quenza preserve, in natura in the municipality of Moltifau.
Climactic hazards and poor resource management: water in Corsica and Sardinia has always been a tricky issue. During the 1990’s, drought provoked water shortages and long periods of difficulty for people who endured shut-offs and reductions in distribution. Though the weather now appears more favourable, poor management persists, accompanied by a lack of infrastructure and obsolete hydraulic lines that are causing water loss, especially in urban areas. If you add excessive water consumption to that, it reveals a touchy situation. Better awareness of water’s value rests with the citizens, but also with the administrative bodies and extends to all of western civilization, still too inclined to lose or waste rather than adopt rational management in the use of resources.

Another aspect of excessive water consumption is common to the southern regions, where the economy is based on the development of activities requiring water, especially agriculture and coastal resort tourism. Therefore, it is necessary to educate and raise awareness regarding a more responsible use of water resources and to choose tap water over bottled water, in order to reduce the environmental impact. But most of all, it is essential to study available resources compared to each person’s needs and to preserve the provision of water for humans and animals.
With financial support from: