

# *The project ANSER (Adriatic Transborder Interreg IIIA) for the assessment of wetland ecological role for waterbird resting and wintering in Northern Adriatic*

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*Since 2005 the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia has started, as Lead Partner, the project ANSER, aimed at evaluating the ecological role of wetlands for waterbird resting and wintering in Northern Adriatic, and at defining the guidelines for the conservation of coastal marine natural heritage.*

*The project is carried out in association with the universities of Trieste and Udine, Region Emilia-Romagna, the institutional bodies for protected area management of Spalato and Dalmazia (Croatia) and Tirana Natural History Museum (Albania). At the local level, the project will be carried out until december 2008 and will involve all wetlands of Friuli Venezia Giulia. Such a project was planned in consideration of (i) the great importance of Northern Adriatic wetlands for bird breeding, resting and wintering, (ii) the fragility of wetland ecosystems, that are often characterized by habitat degradation, (iii) the need to take into account both conservation requirements and socio-economic needs of the people living in the area. Furthermore, the project is an effective way to implement the EU legal tools for nature protection, such as the "Birds" directive (79/409/EC) and the "Habitats" directive (92/43/EC). Such tools have also allowed to identify the areas that are more in need of safeguard, in view of the development of a management and development plan. Indeed, the acquisition of data through studies, researches, monitoring activities is the starting point for a right orientation of management choices, in order to reach effective conservation interventions. The main objectives are to identify the factors of ecological overlap of the different environmental and anthropic components, and to reach a strong coordination between public administrations, research institutes and universities, in order to achieve a good management of wetlands. For this reason, monitoring methods that imply the use of indicators have been developed, so that immediate data on the state and evolutionary tendencies of the ecosystems can be gained, in order to adopt the proper corrective measures where required.*

*The project will also develop new research methodologies and will contribute to the formation of technical figures in the biomonitoring sector, in order to reach a better integration between technical-scientific competencies and other territorial realities (administrations, organizations, stakeholders) involved in the territorial conservation or socio-economic development.*

*The project has the following objectives:*

- 1) to realize waterbird census (Region Friuli Venezia Giulia, Region Emilia Romagna, institutional bodies for protected area management of Spalato and Dalmatia and Tirana Natural History Museum).*

- 2) elaboration of a GIS for data management (Region Friuli Venezia Giulia);
- 3) realization of formation courses (Region Friuli Venezia Giulia);
- 4) waterbird catch and marking (Universities of Trieste and Udine)
- 5) realization of studies on distribution of seagrass beds and impacts (University of Trieste);
- 6) analysis of waterbird metabolic state (University of Udine);
- 7) realization of divulgation activities and of guidelines (Region Friuli Venezia Giulia).

*The activities that involve the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia are briefly described. Bird census will be carried out by periodically monitoring bird populations in the study area over a two-year period. This will allow to define the distribution, the state of the populations, the dynamics of migration of waterbirds in wetland areas. The aim is to define more effective conservation strategies, that are integrated over the whole territory, to determine the ecological role of the different wetland areas, and to define the degree of interconnection. Knowing in detail when the different species are present, and what the populations' state is like, will help to outline problems and requirements at the local, national and community level, both in the hunting sector and in the area of nature conservation. The use of different experimental systems will allow to assess and rank the results obtained with different monitoring methods. Terrestrial and aerial monitoring methods will be used. Terrestrial monitoring will allow to describe bird densities and habitat use. Monitoring will be carried out every month in a number of sites located in the study area at low tide. Furthermore, presence and overall distribution of the species will be monitored every two weeks throughout the study area. The information will be integrated by an aerial monitoring session, carried out once per month.*

*The collected data will be used to implement the central GIS, that will organize also data gathered by the other partners. Such a GIS will be integrated in the "Geographic database of the fauna in FVG (faunistic GIS)". The GIS will allow to analyse the spatial distribution of events, to assess the effects of parameter variations, to carry out environmental characterizations, to define the most significant environmental typologies, to assess the main pressures acting on wetlands, to organize the terms of fruition.*

*Furthermore, thematic maps will be produced and updated, in particular with reference to waterbird and environmental type distribution, to soil use, to human impacts. These maps will help to identify and describe the different ecological units that are relevant for the different species, and to assess the state of conservation of coastal wetlands in the project area.*

*The system will be shared among all partners and the results will be made accessible to all operators that may be interested.*