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STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT
OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL HABITATS
(CDPE)

Group of Specialists on Protected Areas

Sasso Fratino Integral Nature Reserve
(Italy)

Category A

Renewal of the European Diploma

Appraisal report

by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The on-the-spot appraisal prior to the renewal of the European Diploma, Category A, awarded to the Integral Nature Reserve of Sasso Fratino (Italy) took place on 24 and 25 May 1994.

The consultant wishes to thank Professor M PADULA, Administrator of the Casentinesi State Forests, for organising the visit so efficiently. Our talks proved very constructive, because Prof PADULA has an excellent knowledge of the forest, as do his colleagues who joined us : Dr CI D'AMICO, CFS territorial co-ordinator of the National Park and Dr T ANDREA, administrative officer with the Forestry Authority, junior officers G CRUDELE, G BETTI, F NORCINI, B CANNUGI, G ACCIAI and R DI JULIO; and wardens A MARITATO, Z CHRISTI, F CASAMENTI, A MARITATO and D BIGIOLI.

Dr P VICENTINI, an official with the Ministry of Forest Resources in Rome, acted as liaison officer, which made the consultant's task much easier.

During the visit we also met the following representatives of local government and the National Park: MM L SPIGNOLI, Mayor of Bagno di Romagna, A MAINETTI, Mayor of St. Sofia, E VALBONESI, Chairman of the Park and N AGOSTINI, technician.

Details of the geographical information system were explained by Dr A DIBONA and Mr C DELLENTANI of the PANGEA company in Bologna.

The voluntary organisations were represented by Ms R VIGNALI of the WWF and Mr G CRUDELE of the association Wilderness.

In order to fully understand the present situation of the Integral Nature Reserve (INR) of Sasso Fratino, it is necessary to recall how the creation of the Foreste of Casentinesi, Monte Falterona and Campigna National Park have altered the legal context, and to explain the role of the Biogenetic Nature Reserves (BGRs).

We shall then look at a number of matters relating to management, information and local concern.

2. STAGES LEADING UP TO THE CREATION OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Initially, an area of 110 hectares in the Sasso Fratino massif was declared an integral nature reserve by the State Forestry Authority in 1959.

The Ministerial Decree of 26 July 1971 confirmed this status. There followed:

- the Decree of 9 February 1972 increasing the area to 261 hectares;
- the Decree of 25 September 1980 concerning a second extension to 550 hectares (104 at Badia Prataglia and 184 at Campigna);
- the Decree of 15 April 1983 increasing the area of the integral reserve to 764 hectares.

On 2 April 1988, the region of Emilia Romagna instituted the regional park (Parco Regionale del Crinale Romagnolo).

On 14 December 1990 a decree was published concerning the boundaries of the FORESTE CASENTINESI, MONTE FALTERONA and CAMPAGNA NATIONAL PARK, to replace the regional park which never really materialised.

At the end of 1990 the Park Consortium was constituted and its Chairman appointed ; then on 12 July 1993 the Park itself was officially established.

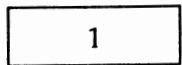
The Park's Director has not yet been appointed.

In all, the Park covers 36 447 hectares, of which 5 338 hectares are state-owned, 17 932 hectares belong to the regions and 13 177 hectares are in private ownership. It is divided up as follows: the Integral Nature Reserve (zone 1) comprises 879 hectares (Sasso Fratino and La Verna); biogenetic nature reserves (zone 2) cover 14 414 hectares, and the forest conservation area (zone 3) extends over 21 154 hectares (see figure 1).

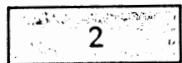
The main stages in the protection of the forest massif are as follows:

- Integral Nature Reserve of Sasso Fratino (1971)
(110 hectares later extended to 764 hectares)
- Biogenetic nature reserves (1976)
- European Diploma (1985)
- Crinale Romagnolo Regional Park (1988)
- Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona and Campigna National Park (1990)

Legend :



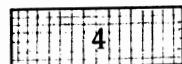
Integral Nature Reserve



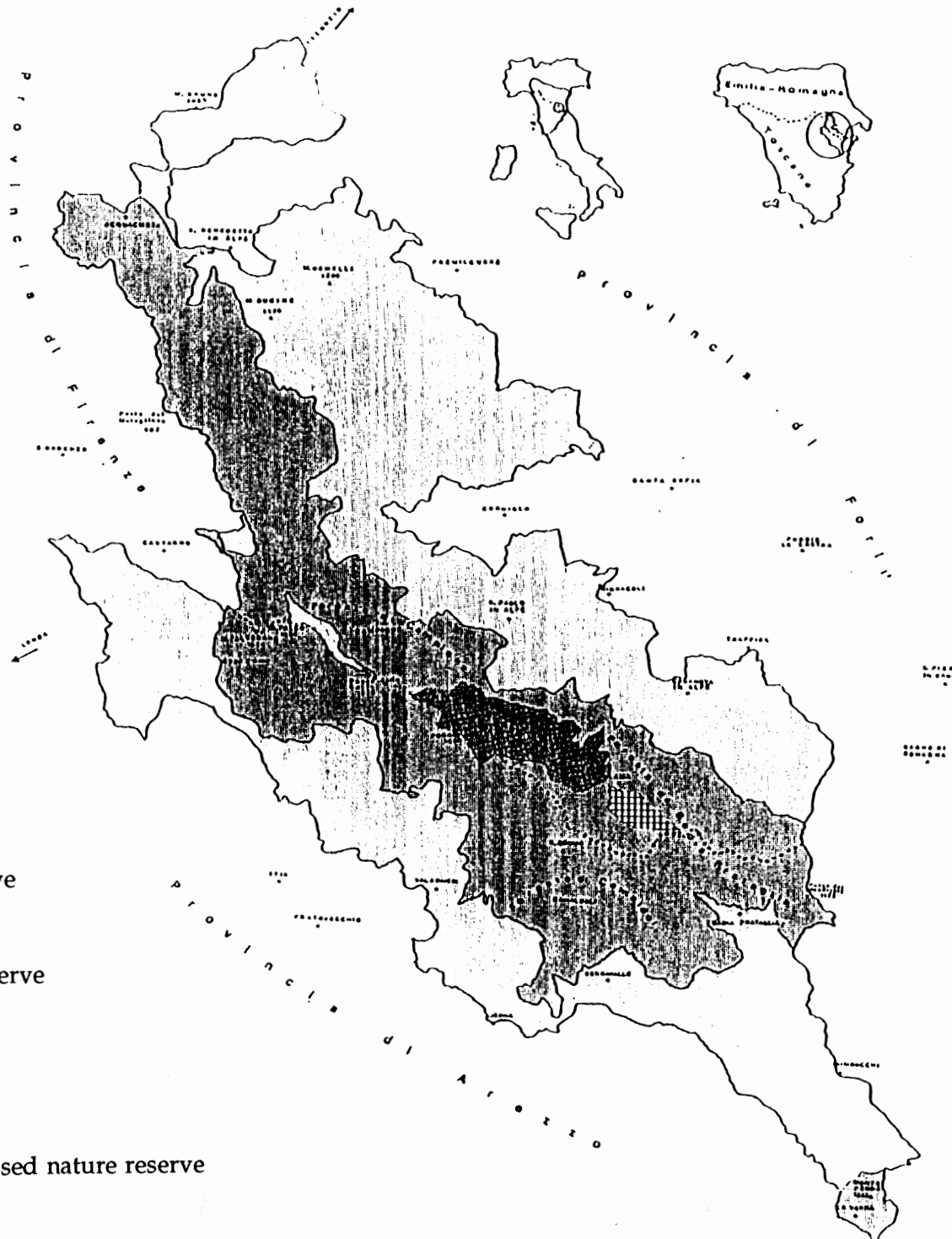
Biogenetic Nature Reserve



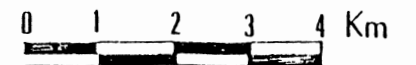
Forest area



Monte Penna, a proposed nature reserve



PARCO NAZIONALE DELLE
FORESTE CASENTINESI
MONTE FALTERONA-CAMPIGNA



3. THE INTEGRAL NATURE RESERVE

Access to the INR is strictly regulated and all visitors must be accompanied by a warden. The number of visitors is normally about one hundred per year at the most (see the figures quoted in the annual reports).

In an integral reserve, the management team refrains from any intervention so that the forest ecosystem can gradually revert to virgin forest.

This development is already clearly discernible in the composition and structure of the plant communities and the amount of dead wood either standing or lying on the ground. A number of plots are regularly monitored for information on the health to the trees and the development of the plantations. Other scientific studies bring further findings whenever there is an opportunity to co-operate with the university (see the list of scientific papers in the annual reports).

4. THE BIOGENETIC NATURE RESERVES

In response to Resolution No. 17 of 15 March 1976 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the European Network of Biogenetic Reserves, the Italian Government decided (DM of 2 March 1977) to institute a series of RNBs on its territory, starting with the existing state-owned nature reserves managed by the Forestry Authority. These are the reserves of Camaldoli, Scodella, Badia Prataglia and Campigna. All these reserves are partially adjacent to the INR of Sasso Fratino and serve as a buffer zone for the latter. Their total surface area is 10 600 hectares.

It will be remembered that in one of the recommendations made in 1990 when the European Diploma was renewed, the problem of the absence of complete buffer areas was mentioned and the hope was expressed that the delimitation of zones within the recently created Crinale Romagnolo Regional Park (1988) would result in improved protection.

5. "ECOLOGICAL" MANAGEMENT IN THE BIOGENETIC RESERVES

Professor M PADULA first used the term "naturalistica" in connection with the ecological management of the Biogenetic Reserves. It is a subtle form of management which aims to maintain or restore a natural forest at many different stages of growth based on indigenous species and the gradual replacement of the monospecific plantations of white fir. Hunting and fishing are prohibited and there are regulations governing the taking of plants.

These operations are carried out progressively as and when events make them appropriate, that is to say mainly when natural disasters occur in the form of landslides, storms or fires.

The question is sometimes asked whether intervention should not be more purposeful. It is worth discussing in a concerted manner with all concerned as there still seems to be some reluctance on the part of environmental groups to accept the idea.

Purposeful intervention could consist in establishing connecting patches of natural woodlands in monospecific conifer massifs and subjecting their edges to accelerated treatment, creating small biotopes and as an occasional complementary measure - maintaining certain modes of traditional management favourable to certain flora and fauna species or to certain living communities.

The Biogenetic Reserves associated with the INR should be in possession of a management plan comprising all the points in favour of the exemplary form of ecological management practised hitherto in biogenetic reserves generally and incorporating the new ideas in the areas of landscape ecology and biological diversity. This plan would make it possible to devise a protection system valid for all time within the new protected area formed by the National Park.

6. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

This concern is definitely present in the minds of the forest administrators, and since the Diploma was last renewed a series of practical measures have been taken. The "Carlo Simeoni" museum opened at Badia Prataglia in the renovated premises of the former convent, and a forest trail specially designed for the disabled was created. Interestingly, encouragement to carry out this type of work had been given in September 1991 at a meeting of managers of Diploma-holding areas held at Bad Wurzach under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

With regard to the creation of a visitor centre at Camaldoni (Recommendation No. 4 of the Diploma Renewal Resolution), two points need to be made:

1. because of the complex administrative and legal context created by the conversion of the Regional Park into a National Park, no action could be taken on this recommendation;
2. the "Casa di Boscaioli" building has been regularly used for the training of young foresters and its potential remains fully intact.

7. THE VIEWS OF THE VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

In accordance with Article 5 of the European Diploma regulations, the consultant made a point of meeting representatives of nature conservation groups.

They take a favourable view of the options adopted for the management of the INR and the Biogenetic Reserves. There is constructive co-operation between them and the forest managers.

Outside these, protected areas, but still within the perimeter of the National Park, some more delicate questions arise. They are concerned with:

- whether to confer legal INR status on the de facto Integral Reserve of Monte Penna (= La Lama);
- whether to create a new INR north of Monte Falco (golden eagle eyrie);
- whether to make access to the massif subject to more stringent rules (in particular the forest road from Concellina to La Lama);
- whether to mark out areas for tourist activity with greater precision;
- whether to keep water abstraction operations under supervision by improving relations with the water boards;

- whether forestry personnel should be given greater responsibility to deal with environmental problems.

There is a clear wish that the Diploma be awarded to the entire Casentino forest conservation area. This proposal would mean extending the area covered by the Diploma from the Sasso Fratino Integral Reserve to the Biogenetic Reserves surrounding it.

8. COMPUTER ASSISTED MANAGEMENT

The administration of an area of 250 km² has involved the Geographic Information System (SIG) and the intervention of a specialised firm in Bologna, PANGEA.

The fact that the topographic data base was made available by the Cartographic Institute has made it easier to assemble data on administrative characteristics, tree stands, ecological aspects, etc, so as to provide those responsible with the instrument they need for information, research and management.

Features of the SIG useful to management include ease of data updating and facilities for scaling, overwriting, simulation and photo insertion.

9. REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE NATIONAL PARK

The mayors know what it means to be awarded the European Diploma and are aware of the mark of distinction it confers on the National Park currently being established. Their wish is that a peripheral area more overtly geared to tourism be put in place.

The Park's chairman mentions numerous organisational problems at a time when the Park has neither status nor personnel. He expresses confidence in the Forestry Authority which will have to continue to perform surveillance and management duties, being the body best qualified to do so. A member of staff of the Forestry Authority, Dr D'AMICO, has been appointed co-ordinator. The chairman also wonders how the award of the European Diploma to the National Park will be considered.

In fact the question is whether the Diploma may be retained for the INR which is one part of a National Park, or whether it would not be right, now that the Diploma is to be renewed for a further five years, to extend it to the Biogenetic Reserves (this is the wish of the voluntary organisations) or to the entire protected area which the National Park represents (this is the wish of the Park's chairman).

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Recommendations made in 1990

The five recommendations made in 1990 are listed below together with comments where appropriate.

1. *A new management programme should be drawn up, including the preparation of non-destructive inventories of small areas which are representative of the major types of forest ecosystems in the total reserve.*

The areas set aside for monitoring the development of the integral reserve are examined at regular intervals. Monitoring conditions and equipment seem to represent a satisfactory compromise between the need for basic scientific information on the evolution of the ecosystem and the obligation to observe the strict protection status of the integral reserve.

2. *An annual survey of developments among the major Ungulata, golden eagles and other carnivores should be carried out. The results of this survey should appear in the annual report.*

Surveys are carried out regularly. Incidentally, the wolf has returned to the area, and the movements of this species of symbolic significance are obviously under close observation.

3. *Every encouragement should be given to the creation of an integral reserve at La Lama, with a view to this being set up as soon as possible, particularly because of the golden eagle eyrie located in this area.*

The integral reserve is established, although its existence still needs to be recognised in law. This recommendation should be repeated and extended to the other areas of the Park which are of a similar value for large wild animals, in particular the golden eagle eyrie.

4. *The Camaldoli reception centre should be set up as soon as possible and be provided with appropriate staff, so that it can offer a full information service in respect of the Casentinesi reserves.*

This matter is discussed in chapter 6. Nothing further need be said on this subject until such time as the National Park's policy on visitor contact and information is known.

5. *Consultation between the various parties involved in the Parc Régionale dela Crinale Romagnolo, should be continued and even extended, with a view solving the problem of the absence of buffer areas to the north-east and south-west of Sasso Fratino reserve. In view of the pressure from tourism, the creation of buffer areas in these locations should be a priority objective over the next five years.*

This point is as relevant as ever but the persons in charge and the legal context are not the same.

10.2 Proposals

The consultant considers that the most important development over the past five years has been the establishment of the Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona and Campigna National Park.

A management plan for the integral reserve and the Biogenetic Reserves is therefore needed without delay so that it can be made an integral part of the new conservation package. For this it is necessary to have a clear, forward-looking overall view of the management objectives, programme and arrangements for these zones.

It is therefore to be hoped that all the know-how and experience required by Professor A. PADULA and his team will be put to use to compile a management plan which would then form the core of the scientific management programme of the National Park.

The consultant therefore suggests the following recommendations:

1. *The development and management policy for the protected areas (Integral Reserve and Biogenetic Reserves) should be incorporated in a management plan so as to ensure the permanent relevance of the long-term objectives of ecological management in the Casentino forests and to enshrine them in the new body of law relating to the National Park;*
2. *Official recognition of the Monte Penna integral reserve should be encouraged;*
3. *The possibility should be examined of creating a new integral reserve at Monte Falco, not least because of the golden eagle eyrie in this area;*
4. *Concerted co-operation with the National Parks authorities should be developed that the nature conservation function can be made fully effective and reinforced throughout the protected area.*

Documents consulted

Document of the nature and environment conservation groups relating to the Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona and Campigna National Park, 24 February 1993, 13 pages.

CENTOFANTI, E. et CRUDELE, G. : la presenza del lupo (*Canis lupus L.*) e dei canidi selvatici in relazione con le popolazioni di ungulati all'interno delle foreste Casentinesi, 1993, rapport, 13 pp

Primo contributo alla conoscenza degli anfibi e dei rettili del Parco nazionale delle foreste Casentinesi, del monte Falterona e di Campigna, rapport 1993/94

PADULA, M. : La Riserva Naturale di Campigna-Lama, In Guide Verdi Maggiore, 43-62

PADULA, M., D'AMICO, C., RICCI, S. et GIOFFREDI, R. : Esperienze di conversione all'alto fusto di boschi cedui invecchiati di faggio nell'Appennino settentrionale (Italia). Accad. Ital. Scienze Forestali, vol 37, 1988, 42 pp

La Riserva naturale Casentinesi : ricerche preliminari ed osservazioni sullo stato sanitario, Compte rendu de la journée d'étude du 18 novembre 1992 organisée à Bologne par la Région d'Emilie-Romagne - Assessorato Agricoltura e Alimentazione, 1993, 137 pp



Appendix I Resolution (90) 11 on the renewal of the European Diploma awarded to the Sasso Fratino Integral Nature Reserve

Appendix II Draft Resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma awarded to the Sasso Fratino Integral Nature Reserve.

Appendix I

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RESOLUTION (90) 11

**ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
AWARDED TO THE SASSO FRATINO INTEGRAL NATURE RESERVE (ITALY)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18 June 1990
at the 442nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma ;

Having regard to Resolution (85) 12 on the award of the European Diploma to the Sasso Fratino Integral Nature Reserve ;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE),

Renews the European Diploma, category A, awarded to the Sasso Fratino Integral Nature Reserve until 21 September 1995 ;

Attaches to the renewal the following condition : it is absolutely essential that the Sasso Fratino Reserve remain an "integral" reserve, in other words that its scientific purpose be duly recognised as having priority and that it be respected ;

Addresses the following recommendations to the authorities which are responsible for the management of the site :

1. a new management programme should be drawn up, including the preparation of non-destructive inventories of small areas which are representative of the major types of forest ecosystems in the total reserve ;
2. an annual survey of developments among the major *Ungulata*, golden eagles and other carnivores should be carried out. The results of the survey should appear in the annual report ;
3. every encouragement should be given to the creation of an integral reserve at La Lama, with a view to this being set up as soon as possible, particularly because of the golden eagle eyrie located in this area ;

4. the Camaldoli reception centre should be set up as soon as possible and provided with appropriate staff, so that it can play its educational role in respect of the Casentinesi reserves ;
5. consultation between the various parties involved in the *Parco Regionale del Crinale Romagnolo* should be continued, and even extended, with a view to solving the problem of the absence of buffer areas to the north-east and south-west of the Sasso Fratino Reserve. In view of the pressure from tourism, the creation of buffer areas in these locations should be a priority objective over the next five years.

Appendix II

Draft Resolution (95) ...

on the renewal of the European Diploma awarded to the Sasso Fratino Integral Nature Reserve (Italy)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15 (a) of the Council of Europe;

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma;

Having regard to Resolution (85) 12 on the award of the European Diploma to the Sasso Fratino Integral Nature Reserve (Italy);

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE);

Renews the European Diploma, category A, awarded to the Sasso Fratino nature reserve until 21 September 2000;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. The development and management policy for the protected areas (Integral Reserve and Biogenetic Reserves) should be incorporated in a management plan so as to ensure the permanent relevance of the long-term objectives of ecological management in the Casentino forests and to enshrine them in the new body of law relating to the National Park;
2. Official recognition of the Monte Penna integral reserve should be encouraged;
3. The possibility should be examined of creating a new integral reserve at Monte Falco, not least because of the golden eagle eyrie in this area;
4. Concerted co-operation with the National Parks authorities should be developed that the nature conservation function can be made fully effective and reinforced throughout the protected area.