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**COMMITTEE FOR THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
IN THE FIELD OF BIOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY**

(CO-DBP)

Group of specialists – European Diploma for Protected Areas

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**The Maremma Regional Park
(Italy)**

RENEWAL

Expert report
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*Document established by
the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

The European Diploma for protected areas was awarded to the Maremma Regional Park in 1992, in category B, and has been renewed since then.

The Secretariat did not accompany the expert on his visit to the site.

Appendix I reproduces Resolution (97) 18 adopted when the Diploma was last renewed. Appendix II sets out a draft resolution prepared by the Secretariat for the purpose of extending the period of validity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Diploma, in category B, was awarded to the Maremma Regional Park on 18 May 1992 and was renewed on 30 September 1997.

The present on-the-spot appraisal was carried out with a view to the renewal of the Diploma for a further 5-year period.

The visit, which was impeccably organised, took place on 14 and 15 June 2001.

Discussions and field visits involved the following individuals:

- Mr Giampiero Sammuri, Chairman
- Mr Enrico Giunta, Director
- Mrs Paola Talluri, guide and interpreter
- Mr Luca Tonini, wardens manager

My thanks go to all these individuals for their commitment to the natural assets of Maremma, their willing assistance and their patience during discussions and field visits.

As the visit took place during an election campaign, it was not possible to meet local authority representatives.

2. SITUATION AND VALUE OF THE SITE

The Maremma Nature Park was created on 5 June 1975 by the region of Tuscany. It became a regional park in 1994 and celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2000.

Situated along the coast in the province of Grosseto in southern Tuscany, the Park overlaps three municipalities: Grosseto to the north, Magliano in Tuscany in the centre and Orbetello in the south. It protects the last sizeable section of the Tuscan coast untouched by tourist development.

It has a rich diversity of Mediterranean vegetation: the typical vegetation of rocky coasts, fine associations of plants linked to dunes, scrub, and forests.

The north-western part of the Park, crossed by the river Ombrone, is an alluvial plain with fine wetlands of international interest and extensively cultivated agricultural areas, interspersed on the right bank of the river by magnificent avenues of pines and other wooded areas. On the left bank there is also a vast stone pine and maritime pine forest covering approximately 700 ha.

The soils are slightly acid above the Verrucano and partly basic, especially above the Trias cave limestone. Outside the hill region is the full range of alluvial, sandy, clay and muddy soils. There is a fossil dune zone between the hills and the river.

3. ADMINISTRATION

The following bodies are responsible for running the Park, established under the Ente Parco Regionale della Maremma set up by the regional law of 16 March 1994;

- the Chairman, appointed by the Region of Tuscany at the proposal of the Park Community;
- the Administrative Council, comprising 10 members including the Chairman, 4 representatives of the municipalities, 1 representative of the province of Grosseto, 1 representative of the universities, 1 representative of the ecology associations and 3 representatives of the region;

- the Park Community, comprising the mayors of the three municipalities and the President of the province of Grosseto; it approves plans and regulations prior to their ratification by the regional authorities;
- the nine-member Scientific Council which advises the Park on matters for which it is competent. It comprises representatives nominated by the Tuscan universities and the National Research Council;
- the Director and staff of the Park who look after day-to-day management.

The Park has undergone long periods without definitively appointed managers. The post of director remained vacant following the retirement of Mr Ilio Boschi in 1994. The former chairman, Mr Andrea Vellutini, fulfilled the duties of chairman and director under the title of commissioner extraordinary. A new chairman, Mr Nicolo Mattei, filled both posts from March 1996 pending new appointments. The new chairman and director now in place were appointed in 2000.

The budget is funded primarily by the region, partly by the province and the remainder by the municipalities. The Park's own resources cover a small part of expenditure. Central government makes a contribution for special activities or investments, as does the European Community.

4. MANAGEMENT

4.1 General remarks

The Park has a sound basis on which it can be managed appropriately: detailed vegetation map, general management plans, and thematic management plans, in particular for forestry and agriculture.

The available financial resources are sufficient for properly managing the Park.

4.2 Zoning

A study for a new zoning plan of the Park is to be carried out; replies to a call for tenders were to be submitted by 30 June 2001. The study should be based on the principles already established, which provide for the following zones:

a) Protected zones

- integral protection zones (limited to a coastal zone and a typical forest zone, two outstanding sites requiring no management);
- controlled protection zones (protection has priority but management measures may be adopted to maintain the existing natural values); some current integral protection forest zones will become controlled protection zones so that specific action may be taken where appropriate but without causing any change to current management;
- protected zones (where limited exploitation of resources is permitted);
- social and economic promotion zone (eastern strip designated for the park infrastructures and more intensive farming).

b) Contiguous zone

This buffer zone is intended for environmental conservation and preservation of the natural values of the protected zones. Any action or activities must be compatible with the Park's objectives. This zone runs along the Ombrone as far as the Grosseto highland. However, it is very limited to the north and south where the limits of the Park are close to Talamone and Principina a Mare. In this zone, the

first contact point is the municipalities, which then inform the owners of the requirements to be complied with. The aim is to maintain the status quo in an approach to protection geared primarily to the landscape.

In the Ombrone delta, a Ramsar zone has been planned for some time but has not yet been formally declared.

In total, the protected zones cover approximately 10,000 ha. The contiguous zone covers the same area.

4.3 Vegetation and flora

Forests, shrubs and scrub cover the hills. There are sclerophyll and mixed *Quercus ilex* forests, and groups of *Quercus pubescens* and *Fraxinus ornus* in cooler places.

The various types of scrub comprise sclerophyll, coastal and thermophile (*Erica arborea*) scrub, oleaster and *Euphorbietum dendroides* - the habitat of the dwarf palm tree (*Chamaerops humilis*). The Park has at least four kinds of Mediterranean scrubland.

The coastal vegetation is still well preserved, consisting on the one hand of vegetation typical of rocky coasts and on the other of fine associations of plants linked to dunes.

Marsh vegetation varies depending on the degree of humidity and salinity: reeds, groups of *Scirpus maritimus*, *Cladium mariscus*, *Juncus acutus*, *Juncus maritimus* and *Schoenus nigricans*. In saltier areas *Salicornia*, *Arthrocnemum* and *Halocnemum* associations thrive. On higher ground we find scrub associations with *Phillyrea* and *Juniperus phoenicea* and forests of *Ulmus minor* and *Fraxinus oxycarpa*.

A very large pine forest was planted in the first half of the nineteenth century with *Pinus pinea*, and seaward, *Pinus pinaster*.

Some thirty plant associations at least are recognised. To these should be added areas which have been changed by man such as meadows, pastureland, olive groves, abandoned olive groves, vineyards and various types of crops.

The flora comprises more than 500 species. In addition to the usual procession of Mediterranean plants, the Park contains several plants endemic to the region or of special phytogeographical interest.

4.5 Forests

Under the management plan, work has been carried out to transform part of the forests, on favourable soil, from coppice into forest. However, this is not so often the case now, as there are no longer any companies interested in carrying out the work and selling the wood.

Pressure from deer severely hampers forest regrowth and signs of browsing are visible everywhere. The regeneration of the pine forest has been taking place, without protective barriers, for several years.

4.6 Wildlife

There is a wealth of local birdlife with the usual range of Mediterranean species, including the roller, bee-eater, wall-creeper, hoopoe and stone curlew. Raptors are well represented, with the lanner falcon present for several years now and, more recently, the peregrine falcon. Egrets have been nesting in recent times.

Every year, a dozen or so marine turtles are accidentally caught by fishermen. The regular presence of the species has prompted the Park's managers to consider the possibility of its reintroduction using eggs taken from the island of Lampedusa.

Mammals include numerous wild boar, the symbol of the Park. The local strain (*Sus scrofa majori*) is unfortunately no longer pure-blooded, following the introduction in the past of boar from central Europe. Imported fallow deer have bred extensively and pose serious browsing problems. There is a small population of roe deer which suffers from competition with the fallow deer.

The porcupine is relatively frequent; the wildcat is rare. There are also stone martens, beech martens, badgers, dormice, and coypu, the latter having been introduced.

Control of the wild boar population is progressing well, thanks to a dozen or so very well constructed live-trapping enclosures, which catch over 400 boar a year. These animals are sold to hunting corporations.

On the other hand, efforts to cut down numbers of fallow deer do not seem to have made much headway.

Given the Park's relatively small size and the close vicinity of farmland, fences have been put up to prevent deer and boar getting out. Tests are under way to see if part of the barbed wire fencing could be replaced with electric fences, which are far cheaper, effective and virtually invisible in the forest undergrowth. However, they do require very frequent checking.

Work on a wildlife control plan has started and will last three years.

4.7 Agriculture

The north-eastern fringe of the Park, starting from the foothills and much of the alluvial plain, are given over to cultivation, with olive groves, vineyards, orchards, cereals, sunflower and wild and cultivated grassland.

Livestock consists of cows and horses specific to the region (Maremma cows and horses). Stock-breeding is mainly concentrated in the plain of Trappola. Livestock also graze in the pine forest and, seasonally, in areas on the wooded hillsides.

The Park has developed an active role in advice and applied research on farming matters relevant to it in both the protected zones and the contiguous zone. It is strongly, and successfully, promoting a shift to organic farming, with the result that the agricultural zones are becoming an increasingly valuable complement to the natural zones in terms of fauna and flora.

In the most sensitive areas, the Park is negotiating "crop loss contracts", which compensate the farmer regardless of the extent of damage caused by game and the amounts harvested.

4.8 Fishing

A recent court ruling in the Park's favour held that the reaches of the Ombrone close to the sea were considered as river waters and that the sea fishing freedom principle did not apply.

The other fishing problem concerns trawling which damages the sea-bed.

4.9 Fire prevention

The Park has set up very active surveillance, especially in high-risk periods, and acquired adequate equipment. In addition, some paths are closed at times of high risk, while others are open only to groups led by a guide. Thanks to these measures, there have been no fires in the Park since it was set up, which is an absolutely remarkable achievement in the Mediterranean region.

5. CULTURAL HERITAGE

There are many vestiges of human occupation dating back to the Palaeolithic period. Later, Benedictine and then Cistercian monks settled in the region. In the 12th century they built the remarkable abbey-church of San Rabano; some impressive ruins of this still remain and have now been consolidated but, unfortunately, for safety reasons, they are surrounded by a very high and unattractive wire fence.

A total of some ten ruined watch-towers are still clearly visible in the Park and its immediate surroundings.

The Park actively promotes this cultural heritage through its guided tours and publications and by undertaking restoration work.

6. EDUCATION, INFORMATION, TOURISM

Numerous information programmes have been developed: guided tours of the Park, properly laid-out trails, visits. Educational activities consist primarily of class visits and five-day courses in a house in the Park.

The numerous projects recently completed include:

- creating a botanical garden in Alberese;
- creating information centres by refurbishing existing buildings in Collecchio and opening another, less comprehensive facility in Talamone;
- laying on numerous guided visits, including in the evening and at night;
- restoring buildings, for example in Bocca d'Ombro which may be rented by visitors for short stays;
- developing programmes aimed at children and young people;
- new projects such as "Emotions in Maremma – between nature, culture and legend".

There are no special measures to monitor the impact of increased visitor numbers.

It is disappointing that the Park has decided to introduce admission fees. These are expensive (15,000 lira) and may discourage visitors, particularly families, who are used to having free admission to nature parks, which is generally the case in western Europe.

7. RESEARCH

The Park continues to encourage research on subjects of direct concern to management. It also authorises other more basic scientific work on the advice of its scientific committee.

How often the results of research are used for the running of the Park is unclear, however. Numerous subjects, such as wildlife management, forest management and shore erosion, crop up during each visit. Many of these are long-term projects but a calendar of activities would be a useful tool for the Park's managers.

The forest house in Scogliotto has been refurbished to provide a laboratory with accommodation for researchers. We saw little sign of it being used during our visit.

8. RELATIONS WITH THE MUNICIPALITIES CONCERNED

Relations appear to be good but it was not possible to check this given the ongoing election campaign.

9. OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS

This section reviews the situation as regards the recommendations made when the Diploma was last renewed and raises additional points as far as the Maremma Park's management is concerned.

1. to devise and implement a wildlife management plan which gives priority to indigenous species and comprises urgent measures to limit the proliferation of deer.

Wildlife management studies are still in progress. The wild boar population is under control, thanks to the regular live-trapping exercises. On the other hand, the deer population is still just as high and it appears that no urgent measures have been taken to limit their proliferation. The recommendation is maintained.

2. to implement the measures necessary for substantially reducing the sources of pollution of the Fosso Razzo.

Major works have at last improved the operation of the Grossetto sewage plant. The state of the Fosso Razzo, which crosses the Park and joins the Ombrone near the mouth of the river, very distinctly improved in 2000.

3. to pursue the development of a network of protected areas including the zones which are complementary to the Maremma Regional Park.

Here too, very good progress has been made. The management of the Diaccia Botrone nature reserve near Castiglione della Pescaia, a substantial wetland providing a valuable complement to the Maremma Park where certain species are concerned, is now entrusted to Maremma. A global strategy is now integrating the management of all the region's wetlands. The protection of the Tuscan archipelago is assured.

4. to monitor developments concerning the shore, avoid any action to counter erosion which could have negative consequences for the natural values and participate in the establishment of a basin authority for the Ombrone.

Erosion continues but there is also an accumulation of materials on certain stretches of the shoreline. Numerous studies continue to focus on this problem, without any obvious solution.

The Park is pursuing its policy of closely monitoring the situation and not undertaking major works. It will experiment with lightweight protection work in the vicinity of Principina a Mare.

5. to encourage the introduction of protective measures on the Park's inshore waters, by instigating, if possible, a ban on boating in a 200 metre strip from the shore.

Efforts here have worked well. Restrictions are in force at the mouth of the Ombrone, where fishing is banned within 300 m of the shore. However, this is difficult to enforce at night-time. The Cala del Forno gulf is still under strong pressure from pleasure craft, particularly those from Talamone. In principle, there is a speed limit close to the shore and an obligation to take a perpendicular approach to the shoreline and dock only at certain points.

6. to conserve fresh water resources and prevent their salinisation by limiting extractions.

The main problem comes from excessive pumping from the water table and canals, resulting in saltwater infiltrating inland.

A province-wide plan is being drawn up to limit the number of wells and their use. Such a plan will be difficult to implement though, because it will entail a switch to crops requiring less irrigation.

7. to continue and intensify the Park's information and educational activities, particularly by creating new information centres and guided tours.

There have been some very positive developments here, with the opening of new centres and guided tours, the botanical gardens, and continued efforts aimed at children and young people and the "Emotions in Maremma" project.

At the same time, visiting times have been substantially increased. Whereas the Park used to be closed two days a week, it is now permanently open and also runs night-time visits. The effects of this increased pressure from visitors should be monitored. A substantial area of the Park remains closed to visitors and could provide a useful point of comparison.

8. to take all necessary measures to ensure optimum compatibility between agricultural activities and the preservation of the richness and diversity of the Park's flora and fauna, by continuing and expanding the action already being conducted on these lines.

The Park's commitment has been substantial and constructive, and the advice provided to farmers is as useful as ever. Organic farming is enjoying considerable expansion, and the crop loss contracts benefit both farmers and wildlife.

One aspect still requiring more attention is the integration of conservation efforts aimed at the flora (eg meadow flowers) and fauna (such as the hoopoe) linked to farmland and farming practices, so that farming methods are more closely geared to maintaining the biological diversity associated with them.

9. to complete and implement the revision of the zoning plan and forward the latter to the Council of Europe.

Very little progress has been made with this revision, imminent in 1996. A call for tenders was issued with a deadline of 30 June 2001, and the necessary studies are now to be commissioned.

10. Preservation of the Trappola area

Much of the zone on the right bank of the Ombrone is possessed by estate-owners, whose land management is very respectful of nature and the landscape. It would be useful, however, or indeed necessary, to ensure the conservation of these zones on a lasting basis, through private agreements for example.

11. Applied research

Numerous research projects have been completed or are under way. We had the impression that there could be a certain delay between obtaining results and applying them to the Park's management. More active collaboration between researchers and park managers would result in swifter implementation.

12. Admission fee

The charging of a substantial fee, even with family and group concessions, should be seriously reconsidered. This goes against the principle of free access to nature and has already drawn some negative reactions. The pros and cons should therefore be weighed up a lot more carefully.

11. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Maremma Park continues to preserve natural assets and landscapes of major interest.

We recommend, therefore, that the European Diploma be renewed for a further five-year period, subject to the following recommendations:

1. devise and implement a wildlife management plan which gives priority to indigenous species and comprises urgent measures to limit the proliferation of deer.
2. monitor developments concerning the shore and avoid any action to counter erosion that could adversely affect the natural assets.
3. improve protection and surveillance of the Park's inshore waters.
4. conserve fresh water resources and prevent their salinisation by limiting extractions.
5. evaluate the impact of the Park's extended visiting times and reconsider the issue of a high admission fee.
6. continue to ensure optimum compatibility between agricultural activities and the preservation of the richness and diversity of the Park's flora and fauna, by continuing and expanding the action already conducted on these lines.
7. complete and implement the revision of the zoning plan and forward the latter to the Council of Europe.
8. ensure the long-term conservation and management of the Trappola area.
9. encourage swift implementation of applied research results in the Park's management.

Pierre Hunkeler
15 September 2001

Appendix I

RESOLUTION (97) 18

ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA AWARDED TO THE MAREMMA NATURE PARK (ITALY)

*(adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30 September 1997
at the 602nd 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 (92) 17 on the award of the European Diploma to the Maremma Nature Park;

Having regard to the proposals of the Bureau of the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (BU-DBP);

Renews the European Diploma in category B, awarded to the Maremma Nature Park until 18 May 2002;

Attaches to the renewal the following recommendations, to:

1. devise and implement a wildlife management plan which gives priority to indigenous species and comprises urgent measures to limit the proliferation of deer;
2. implement the measures necessary for substantially reducing the sources of pollution of the Fosso Razzo;
3. pursue the development of a network of protected areas including the zones which are complementary to the Maremma Regional Park;
4. monitor developments concerning the shore, avoid any intervention against erosion, which could have negative consequences for the natural values, and participate in the establishment of a basin agency for the Ombrone;
5. encourage the introduction of protective measures on the park's inshore waters, by instigating, if possible, a ban on boating in a 200 metre strip from the shore;
6. conserve fresh water resources and prevent their salinisation by limiting extractions;
7. continue and intensify the park's information and educational activities, particularly by creating new information centres and guided tours;
8. take all necessary measures to ensure optimum compatibility between agricultural activities and the preservation of the richness and diversity of the park's flora and fauna, by continuing and expanding the action already being conducted on these lines;
9. complete and implement the revision of the zoning plan and forward the latter to the Council of Europe.

Appendix II

Draft resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to the Maremma Nature Park (Italy)

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 (92) 17 awarding the European Diploma to the Maremma Regional Park;

Taking into consideration the expert's report presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists - European Diploma for protected areas on 28 and 29 January 2002;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the Activities of the Council of Europe in the Field of Biological and Landscape Diversity (CO-DBP),

Renews the European Diploma awarded to the Maremma Regional Park until 18 May 2007;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. devise and implement a wildlife management plan which gives priority to indigenous species and comprises urgent measures to limit the proliferation of deer.
2. monitor developments concerning the shore and avoid any action to counter erosion that could adversely affect the natural assets.
3. improve protection and surveillance of the Park's inshore waters.
4. conserve fresh water resources and prevent their salinisation by limiting extractions.
5. evaluate the impact of the Park's extended visiting times and reconsider the issue of a high admission fee.
6. continue to ensure optimum compatibility between agricultural activities and the preservation of the richness and diversity of the Park's flora and fauna, by continuing and expanding the action already conducted on these lines.
7. complete and implement the revision of the zoning plan and forward the latter to the Council of Europe.
8. ensure the long-term conservation and management of the Trappola area.
9. encourage swift implementation of applied research results in the Park's management.