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Proposal for a ‘sanctuary area’ dedicated to the protection of *Brachytrupes megacephalus* (Orthoptera: Gryllidae) in the Nature Reserve of Vendicari (Sicily, Italy)

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There are numerous initiatives in the world that concern ‘sanctuaries’ or protected areas aimed for the conservation of vertebrate species. However, almost nothing exists for the conservation of insects. The project here proposed concerns *Brachytrupes megacephalus*, the largest gryllid in Europe and a species of ‘community interest’ as part of the EU Habitat Directive. It is uniquely adapted to sandy dunal habitats which are increasingly subjected to transformations and habitat degradation due to anthropogenic factors.

The project is proposed for the Vendicari Reserve of the Sicilian Region where the species is present in well-defined areas. Actions and initiatives aimed for its preservation that are being proposed include:

(i) Focused management of these areas with the purpose of species conservation based on protocols for IUCN - IV category areas and in agreement with the Reserve Staff Manager; (ii) Monitoring and research on the species’ activity in conjunction to studies which are already ongoing in the reserve in collaboration with the University of Catania; (iii) Setting up of a section inside the Ecomuseo-Visitors Centre, currently managed by volunteer naturalists with the aim of disseminating information and educating the public about this species; (iv) Collection of documentation on the species in a dedicated section of the ‘Bruno Ragonese’ Library annexed to the Ecomuseum; (v) Encouraging the general public to record observation of entomological species living in the dunal habitat of which *B. megacephalus* is a prominent species in the reserve.

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