

Implementing Volunteers in Park Programmes

Guidelines for managers and stakeholders of protected areas
in South Eastern Europe



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



*The Italian Ministry of
Environment, Land and Sea*



L'Umana Dimora Onlus Lazio

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in South Eastern Europe**

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About L'Umana Dimora Onlus Lazio

L'Umana Dimora Onlus Lazio is an environmental association recognised as an "Association of Environmental Protection" by the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea.

From the beginning, the association has distinguished itself by prioritising the presence of man in nature. Protection of natural resources, the education of young people and the promotion of sustainable development are the group's main fields of work.

L'Umana Dimora Onlus Lazio's activities aim to: develop strategies linked with preservation and defence of all life (people, animals and plants) in its own habitat, through the commitment of cooperatives, associations, public offices and NGOs; raise awareness of environmental issues through training courses addressed at young environmental leaders, farmers, public administrators, municipal staff, teachers, and environmental educators; organise vocational training and to assist with institution building; promote initiatives in rural areas to stop the migration to urban areas and to valorise traditional products and organic agriculture; support environmental research through communication with the public; link institutions and people in the field of nature protection; and educate young people to respect the environment and live in a more sustainable way.

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Introduction

Project background

The REC and L'Umana Dimora Onlus Lazio have been working together for almost two years on the implementation of the project: Training for Staff Members of Protected Areas in Implementing Volunteers in Park Programmes (ViP) in Central and Eastern Europe. Eight parks were initially identified (with the help of the Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea) in four countries in South Eastern Europe: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro (the project got underway before the country's dissolution into the independent republics of Serbia and Montenegro) and Turkey. Two parks/protected areas in each of the target countries were invited to participate: Hutovo Blato and Kozara Mountain Park (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Stara Planina and Skadar Lake (Serbia and Montenegro); Buyuk Menderes Delta National Park and Kaz Mountain National park (Turkey), and Lonsko Pole and Zumberak (Croatia)

In all of these countries the project was welcomed as an opportunity for making improvements to the parks' management and increasing international cooperation. The project focuses on the development of skills in implementing volunteer programmes. National park staff were trained on skills and know-how for developing and managing volunteer programmes, but also on a variety of issues related to best practices in nature interpretation and environmental education, development of eco-tourist facilities and services, and management and running of national parks based on practical examples and knowledge from the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise (NPALM). A Volunteers in the Park (ViP) Programme has been running in NPALM, since 1990 and the park has developed excellent management practices. Italy has gained considerable experience in developing successful programmes for involving local communities in management of national parks and reserves using ViP, nature interpretation plans and other progressive tools. There are also a variety of initiatives which could be demonstrated as good examples and from which local communities could benefit greatly considering that they are situated near national parks.

The transfer of knowledge and know-how provides the opportunity to bring and consolidate the efforts of local communities towards the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources of national parks in South Eastern Europe (SEE). Capacity building is important for the countries in this region, where protected areas are taking steps towards better management and use of resources (natural and cultural). These efforts also help to set the stage for building stronger civil society in these countries.

Based on the experience from the implementation and on-going evaluation of the project, the REC and L'Umana Dimora Onlus Lazio developed these guidelines. The guidelines, which are intended for park managers, employees and generally for people cooperating with national parks, provide advice, know-how and best practice for developing volunteer programmes.

About the guidelines

The guidelines are developed to equip protected area (PA) staff and a core group of key local activists representing the local NGO community, teachers and/or professional associations (e.g. eco-tourism providers, members of local tourism associations, etc.) with specific knowledge on benefits and positive impacts of volunteer programmes. It should help interested stakeholders establish/implement volunteers in the park (ViP) programmes in utilising specific experiences from other countries or other parks and taking into account local conditions. In the guidelines we attempt to demonstrate the practical benefits of ViP programmes for parks. We demonstrate how to involve the public in the ViP programme's development and management and help to promote new approaches to protected area management and community involvement.

These guidelines build on the extensive Italian experience with ViP projects and include lessons learned from the volunteer programmes implemented in the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise.



Structure of the guidelines

The guidelines are divided into six chapters, where chapter 1 explains the general benefits of volunteerism, what a volunteer programme is, and the wider European frame of volunteerism. In chapter 2 we discuss benefits of volunteer programmes, the relationship between economic development of a protected area and volunteerism, and potential economic and social aspects involved.

In the third chapter we focus on the practical experiences with volunteerism and describe a few examples of volunteerism in practice. It is primarily a case study of NPALM and other Italian parks, while in the second part we provide a snapshot overview of volunteerism examples from Central and Eastern Europe.

Chapter 4 of the guidelines provides practical steps, advice, and hints for developing a volunteer programme. Issues like assessment of local conditions and capacities of the key stakeholders, how to start up, and the potential challenges of implementation are discussed. Chapter 5 summarises issues and aspects you should not forget when designing or developing your volunteer programmes. In the final chapter we discuss networking and international dimensions of volunteering.

Special thanks

Special thanks for helping with the preparation of the guidelines go to Antonella Ciarletta, Angelica Esposito, Francesca Giannini (Arcipelago Toscano National Park), and Cristina Del Corso (Gran Paradiso National Park).

All the photos in this publication were taken from the archives of the volunteers of the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise. The drawings were done by Cristiana Priore.

Abbreviations

- CEE** – Central and Eastern Europe
- EU** – European Union
- EVC** – European Volunteer Centre
- IVD** – International Volunteer Day
- IYV** – International Year of the Volunteer
- LIFE** – Financial Instrument for the Environment
- MDGs** – Millennium Development Goals
- NPALM** – National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise
- PA** – Protected Area
- SEE** – South Eastern Europe
- ViP** – Volunteers in Park

What is a Volunteer Programme?

International online encyclopedia Wikipedia¹ defines “volunteer” as someone who serves in a community primarily because he/she chooses to do so. People choose to work for non-profit organisations, helping others in their free time or protecting natural and cultural assets, sometimes individually or as part of a group. An individual’s motivation is always unique. Some do it out of altruism or because the service makes their own life better. Some see participation in the community as a responsibility that comes with citizenship or religious beliefs.

Some want to gain experience that can add to career prospects, as many employers value volunteering experience, while others simply want to meet different people from other walks of life or countries and make new friends.

The European Volunteers Centre² operates on the principle that volunteering matters because of its horizontal nature, which encompasses the range of areas where it plays a role. Volunteering contributes to social cohesion and strengthens solidarity; it is a tool for integration (of migrants, of the elderly, of the unemployed); it fosters active citizenship; it is a means of lifelong learning; it creates economic value; it fosters networking between stakeholders and creates what is known as “social capital.” Last but not least, volunteering is about fun, about feeling good and useful to society. It is very often a life-changing experience for the volunteer and for the people the volunteer works with or for.

Nature protection and conservation has, to a large extent, depended on volunteers and activists doing this work not because it is required, but because of the feeling that it is needed. Originally, natural parks and nature conservation activities were initiated by people who did it on top of their normal workload or occupation. Thanks to these volunteers, nature protection has been institutionalised and is considered “normal,” necessary and important.

Many national parks and protected areas benefit from extensive networks of volunteers and their work. People who want to experience nature and learn about imperilled species and wild habitats, all while meeting and working alongside others who love nature, are

volunteering their time in many countries around the world. Their work and contributions are increasingly recognised.

The year 2001 was the International Year of the Volunteer, as designated by the United Nations General Assembly in November 1997 and sponsored by 123 countries all around the world. December 5 is International Volunteer Day, which offers an opportunity for volunteer organisations and individual volunteers to make visible their contributions — at local, national and international levels — to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Volunteer involvement provides the opportunity to bring and consolidate the efforts of the local community towards the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources of national parks and protected areas. The experience is highly relevant for the countries of the SEE region, which are striving for a more sustainable management of protected species and resources (natural and cultural). Additionally, volunteer involvement sets the stage for building stronger civil society in these countries.

Organising the work of volunteers may be a relatively easy task if we talk about a few people in an ad-hoc manner, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to establish a continuous, sustainable system of attraction, involvement and management of people interested in spending some time working with park authorities or other stakeholders. At that point we instead need to speak of what we call in these guidelines a “volunteer programme.”

By “volunteer programme” we refer to a consolidated system of planning, carrying out and evaluating longer-term involvement of people in volunteer activities. There are many ways to design such programmes and to involve potential volunteers and stakeholders. In these guidelines we will look at some of them. Before we start with practical hints for programme development, we provide useful background information and arguments which may be used for those planning, or thinking about developing, volunteer programmes in their natural park or protected area or in general nature protection or conservation work.

1 See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volunteer> for more information

2 For information see www.cev.be. The European Volunteer Centre is a European network of 38 volunteer development agencies and volunteer centres representing thousands of volunteers at the local level.

Voluntary service: from solidarity to reciprocity

By Antonella Ciarletta

*...There are those who give with joy
And that joy is their reward...*

(G.K. Gibran)

A volunteer is one who completes an action of his or her own free will, out of personal choice. Voluntary service is a free action to offer service to people with specific needs. The volunteer is one who acts with free choice inside a group. It is necessary to be familiar with selflessness in order to reach a more real vision of the feelings that push volunteers to donate their time. The gift brings great relational potentiality and always provokes the activation of the relationship of social collaboration and of reciprocity.

Reciprocity is one of the main modalities of interpersonal relations. It is a primary need of man that verifies, through gift exchange, the possibility of future exchanges. The gift that generates reciprocity is a gift that creates relations with others. The volunteer has an interest in the other and has an interest and desire to create ties through the gift. The ability to establish relations is tied to the ability of individuals to establish a group based on a common way of thinking, feeling and acting or to share engagements and common interests.

Through the engagement, the volunteer establishes a relationship with others trying to reach, inside organisations, the objective of social solidarity. Some people are excluded because they act without an interest in modifying human relationships. This point of view considers activities that involve contact with other people more important than cultural or environmental values. This helps to separate the economic value of the voluntary action from the educational one.

The economic value resides in the production of environmental or cultural services that could be paid for but are free of charge, improving the quality of life without a cost to the community. The educational value consists of revealing relationships and sociability. The volunteer acts, pushed by a deep desire for an alternate realisation of himself in a different professional field. The engagement of the volunteer service today is to promote and to testify to a culture, a way to be and a way to think.

The modality, the place, the duration of the service can vary, but the ideal is the same: it comes from the solidarity that generates reciprocity connected to a critical conscience and to a concrete participation in reality, without accepting things passively as they are. In the last few years we have been assisting a progressive increase in the volunteers' requests in the fields of nature conservation and species protection.

There is also a growing tendency to create networks and to strongly operate according to common plans because the volunteer service is influenced by the dynamics of social processes: it is the desire to take part and to donate time to become arms, legs, minds and hearts where the need calls. The educational function of volunteering is also to teach he who receives not to feel as if he is in debt, but to construct through the resolution of problems, new solidarity and development. Every man and woman must be recognised as a "person" and "reality." This is possible only through a human relationship that supposes to listen, to compare, to exchange, and to respect those who receive aid.

He who decides to donate just time will feel strongly that he has had a new experience, one that is complex, comprehensible, but not always immediately able to stimulate curiosity. The volunteer action can and must be a key to develop new professional competences and to improve abilities with the objective of confirming the validity of joining and sharing in social engagement.

Wider European framework of volunteerism

The European Volunteers Center (EVC) estimated that there are more than 100 million people in Europe engaged in voluntary action. They are young and old, white and black, men and women, of different nationalities and economic circumstances, of various political backgrounds, migrants, socially excluded or well integrated into their communities. It is hard to find representative groups in Europe that present such a huge potential and diversity.

Volunteer programmes in Europe cover a great variety of topics and are conducted by a colourful spectrum of people and organisations. The European Union has been promoting volunteerism through current policies and programmes such as the European Volunteers Service (a part of the YOUTH programme), the Grundtvig Programme, and Europe for Citizens, which provide a good starting point to build on future development (see box "Supporting programmes of the European Union"). However, due to its horizontal character, volunteering cannot easily be placed in one directorate general within the Euro-

Supporting programmes of the European Union

European Voluntary Service (a part of the YOUTH Programme)

The YOUTH Programme is the EU's mobility and non-formal education programme targeting young people aged 15 to 25. The programme is open to youth in 31 European countries. The YOUTH Programme offers possibilities to young people in the form of both group exchanges and individual voluntary work, as well as support activities. The YOUTH Programme is based on the experiences of the former Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service programmes.

European Voluntary Service offers young people the opportunity to volunteer in another country, usually for a period of six to 12 months. A wide variety of placements can be found in the social, cultural, environmental, and sports sectors. Each project has three partners, a volunteer, a sending organisation and a host organisation. The activities should be designed to:

- take place in a country other than where the volunteers live;
- be non-profit-making and unpaid;
- not involve job substitution or job replacement; and
- last for a limited period (maximum 12 months).

The programme is open to those who are legally resident in an eligible country and are between 18 and 25 years old. Certain exceptions regarding age are allowed and are judged on a case-by-case basis.

There are no participation fees and the volunteer receives board, lodging and a small allowance from the host organisation. For details, see <http://ec.europa.eu/youth/program/index_en.html>

Grundtvig Programme

Grundtvig is the name of a European Union programme in the field of education, (part of Socrates). Through Grundtvig, the European Commission provides funding to promote exchanges of experiences and the development of a European dimension in all sectors of adult education. Grundtvig addresses a great variety of subject areas and educational providers. It is open to all kinds of institutions and organisations, whether working in formal or informal adult education.

Europe for Citizens

Europe for Citizens (formerly Citizens for Europe) is a European Union programme designed to help bridge the gap between citizens and the European Union. The global aim of the proposed programme is to contribute to:

- giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing an ever closer Europe, united in and enriched through its cultural diversity;
- forging a European identity, based on recognised common values, history and culture; and
- enhancing mutual understanding between European citizens respecting and celebrating cultural diversity, while contributing to intercultural dialogue.

pean Commission, and there is ongoing debate in the EU on how to promote and support volunteerism.

Having said that, it is not surprising that most of the volunteer activities are conducted under the framework of national policies and local legal systems. Generally, countries that have more tradition in organising volunteers have developed better frameworks. Sometimes volunteer programmes are a good basis for bilateral or multilateral cooperation among countries. This is another area where volunteer programmes are important — they may support and foster cooperation among people of different nationalities, ethnic origins or social status. These aspects were recognised, for instance, by the Parks for Peace initiative.

Also, volunteer programmes play a key role in

nature protection. Around the globe, protected areas have been used successfully as venues for international cooperation. Park authorities, NGOs and global organisations have realised that cooperation in conservation can have significant benefits in the pursuit of peace between countries in conflict.

This approach is supported by the REC in the SEE region. The Balkan Peace Parks project brings together people focusing on protecting natural areas in Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. A similar effort has started between Serbia and Bulgaria in an effort to create better trans-boundary cooperation through the Peace Park at Stara Planina, which is a protected area straddling the common border.



Benefits of volunteer programmes

Volunteering produces two important results:

- It helps to create a stable and cohesive society.
- It adds value to the services that governments provide.

Volunteering brings benefits to both society at large and the individual volunteer. It has a role to play in contributing to each of the three priority areas outlined in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action: social integration, poverty alleviation and full employment.

First, volunteering makes an important economic contribution to society. In the few countries where volunteer work has been empirically studied, the contributions are estimated at between 8 percent and 14 percent of gross domestic product. Given the impact of most legislation on the willingness and ability of individuals to volunteer their time (such as length of working week, school-leaving and retirement age, and measures affecting women's participation in the labour force), there is clearly a case on economic grounds alone for governments to promote a favourable environment for volunteering in all sectors and by all citizens.

Second, participation has long been seen as an essential element of good governance and development. Volunteering is a key means by which individuals articulate their engagement as citizens, and by building trust and reciprocity among citizens, volunteering contributes to a more cohesive, stable society.

Third, volunteering promotes the social integration of those who are excluded or marginalised. For example, when people with disabilities participate in volunteer programmes, they challenge negative stereotypes of the disabled as passive recipients of care. Likewise, volunteering for young people offers opportunities for self-development and provides a valuable grounding in the responsibilities of citizenship. For older people volunteering contributes to the process of "active aging" by helping the newly retired adjust to life without the structure of the workplace and by improving physical and mental well-being.

Fourth, volunteering has a role to play in promoting full employment by enhancing the employability of the unemployed. For those in search of paid employment, volunteering can boost self-confidence, and provide access to workplace networks and an opportunity for

the development of specific marketable skills. Volunteering can also lead to the creation of new jobs by developing services which are later taken over by the state and market and turned into paid jobs.

Despite these benefits, in many countries the most marginalised groups in society are the least likely to participate in volunteer programmes.

The barriers to participation are well documented: poverty, unemployment, youth alienation, and poor organisational practice. For volunteering to contribute most effectively to social integration it is essential that opportunities for greater involvement are opened up to people from excluded groups. On the other hand, volunteering is a vehicle for youth to acquire both technical and life skills. Moreover, evidence suggests that people who start to volunteer at a young age continue to do so throughout their lives. In some countries participation by young people appears to have declined while in others it has increased.

In most cases there has been a shift away from more traditional forms of volunteering towards "newer" more dynamic forms of activity, such as environmental protection. Governments have a role to play in promoting volunteering among young people by, for example:

- promoting volunteering within the education and youth services;
- developing specific programmes to encourage youth volunteering;
- developing systems to recognise and accredit volunteering; and
- working with the media and other stakeholders to present a more attractive, up-to-date image of volunteering.

Estimating the value of volunteerism

Although, the economic contribution of volunteering for society is significant, there are few reliable figures on the exact monetary value. Volunteer work is almost invisible and consequently tends to be ignored in national objectives and in indicators of national per-



formance. To rectify this narrow focus, it is necessary to put a value on unpaid household and volunteer work.

There are two benefits that flow from most human activities: “output” benefits and “process” benefits. The distinction between these two kinds of benefits is best illustrated by an example. Consider the activity of meal preparation.

The positive output benefits are the meals themselves, the “transferable” outputs of the meal preparation which accrue to the persons eating the meals.

The process benefits of meal preparation, which may be positive or negative, are the pleasure or displeasure the chef obtains from the time spent in meal preparation and cooking. These process benefits are not transferable to another person.

With voluntary work the transferable output benefits are the services provided to others by the volunteers. The non-transferable process benefits are the pleasures obtained by the volunteers from the time spent in volunteering. Unfortunately, the statistical

3 See <www.unv.org> for more information

methods so far devised for valuation have not come up with an objective method of valuing process benefits. The best that can be done is a subjective method of asking individuals to evaluate the pleasure/displeasure obtained from an activity on a scale of, say, 1 to 5, for: Very unpleasant, Unpleasant, Neither pleasant or Unpleasant, Pleasant, and Very pleasant. This scaling process does not lead to a monetary valuation of an activity but does allow comparisons between different activities. Several methods have been devised to put a monetary value on the output benefits from the time spent in voluntary work.

A method developed in the United Kingdom called the Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA) puts a value on the resources used to support volunteers (management staff costs, training, recruitment, insurance and administration) in relation to the value of volunteer time.

This approach quantifies the economic investment that organisations make in their volunteers. As many organisers of volunteers would contend, contrary to popular opinion, volunteers are not free of cost. The VIVA ratio, which states that for every dollar invested in volunteers there is a return of X dollars in the value of the volunteers' work, is calculated by dividing the value of volunteer time by organisational investments. This method is very useful in producing audit data for individual organisations.

Undoubtedly, the most satisfactory valuation method involves counting the specific outputs and pricing these outputs at market prices of comparable goods or services produced and sold in the market.

For example, the meals provided at home can be counted and valued at market prices for comparable restaurant or take-away meals. The "value added" by the unpaid household labour is then obtained by deducting the costs of the food, energy and other materials and the cost of the household capital used in the meal preparation. This method gives a more accurate reflection of the labour productivity of the technology of the household.

An alternative method, which is less satisfactory from the point of view of reflecting the productivity or efficiency of household technology, involves valuing the time spent in an unpaid activity at a "comparable" market wage. The wage chosen is either the "opportunity cost" of the time the persons involved in unpaid work could have obtained if they had spent the time in paid work; the "specialist wage" that would be needed to pay a specialist from the market to do the activity (say, a cook to do cooking or a babysitter to do baby sitting); or the "generalist wage" that a general housekeeper would be paid to do the unpaid work.³

We could start showing the amount of hours they give and the amount of money they save in labour costs. Although we try to place a value on their service, what they do cannot be measured by mere numbers. Their contributions go well beyond the hours they contribute and money they save. For this purpose, the hours volunteers contributed to the park could be broken up into five categories. These categories are as follows:

Annual/special events – The hours donated by volunteers that participate in or assist with the organisation, preparation, or operation of large scale events held on an annual or one-time basis.

Boards and committees – Those hours accumulated by volunteers that serve on a board or committee in an advisory or planning capacity.

Community service – The hours court mandated volunteers have assisted resource staff with field operations, as a part of their sentencing or in lieu of detention.

Programmes and facilities – These are hours accrued by volunteers that help maintain the department's facilities or assist with programmes on an ongoing basis.

Service projects – The hours contributed by volunteers who participate in a service project that involves manual labour, such as painting, tree wrapping, planting, and mulching, site amenity construction, trash and debris pick up, etc.

Economic and social benefits of ViP for protected-area management

The relationship between the park authority in charge of the PA and its other stakeholders is often not as good as would be desirable. It is not uncommon, for instance, that the park in charge sees the local community primarily as a potential threat to the protected area, that the indigenous inhabitants of the area are not recognised in their role in maintaining biodiversity, or that local residents see the creation of a protected area as an oppressive development, bringing in foreign values and depriving them of wealth and culture. Not surprisingly, conflicts and misunderstandings between agencies and local residents are the cause of some of the most serious failures in the management of protected areas. In addition, if the park has full jurisdiction within the PA and no say in what happens in its surroundings, while other stakeholders have no say within the PA but control whatever happens around it, various types of problems "at the boundary" become likely. For instance, conflicts may arise

between the agency in charge of the PA and various public authorities (e.g., national, district or municipal governments).

Involving volunteers, especially the local population, in management activities means in a substantial way to identify:

- a protected territory (or set of resources) and its boundaries;
- the range of functions and sustainable uses it can provide;
- the recognised stakeholders in the protected area;
- the functions and responsibilities assumed by each stakeholder; and
- the specific benefits and rights granted to each stakeholder.

Many volunteer programmes derive from participatory approaches which are closely linked with the development of civil society. By examining and comparing numerous field-based experiences, it is possible to derive a series of key potential benefits, costs and obstacles in volunteer management processes. Potential benefits are likely to include:

- alliances between park authorities and local stakeholders to fend off resource exploitation from non-local interests, which often represent the main threat to conservation;
- effective sharing of management responsibilities among all the parties involved;
- increased effectiveness of management as a consequence of harnessing the people's knowledge and skills, and comparative advantages (e.g. for monitoring the status of natural resources or surveying the protected area's borders) — at times, the very use of resources by stakeholders is beneficial to the local ecology;
- enhanced capacities in resource management for both the park and the other stakeholders (as a consequence of enhanced communication and dialogue);
- increased trust between park and local population, shared "ownership" of the conservation process, and greater commitment to implement decisions taken together;

- increased understanding and knowledge among all concerned of the views and positions of others and thus prevention of problems and disputes, and avoidance of waste of resources;
- increased public awareness of conservation issues; and
- greater likelihood of integration of conservation efforts into social, economic and cultural issues and agendas, within and outside the PA.

Volunteer processes have, however, a number of costs and potential obstacles that need to be evaluated before embarking on implementation. These include:

- early and substantial investments of time, financial resources and human resources in both the preparatory phase and the process of developing the programmes — the human resources need to include professionals with skills of environmental education and good group-management capacity;
- potential opposition by local residents who see the very existence of the PA (and the presence of volunteers) as depriving them of a needed potential for jobs and economic development;
- potential opposition by stakeholders who may exploit people-park conflicts to pursue their own agendas (e.g. politicians who wish to gain support from angry local residents, businesses which use people as a front-line to penetrate protected territories and eventually set up economic activities, etc.)
- chances that the volunteer programmes cannot be implemented without compromising the conservation goals of the PA in a substantial way; and
- chances that volunteer involvement cannot be maintained because of underestimated problems or intervening factors (e.g. changes in the economic conditions that make a management option viable and profitable, changes of political administration, emergence of new stakeholders, violent unrest, etc.)

Volunteering is a cost-effective way of providing a range of social and welfare services. But it is not cost free. To flourish it requires an effective infrastructure, both at national and local levels, to help mobilise support and match volunteers to appropriate organisations and tasks. Governments have a role to play in funding this infrastructure and in ensuring the requisite legal and fiscal framework is in place.

Volunteerism in practice



Volunteerism may have many aspects, and can be focused on different topics, utilising a great variety of approaches. In this chapter we present a few approaches to development and implementation of a volunteer programme. The first part deals with the case study of the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise, Italy. The park has been very successful in development and running a volunteer programme and some of the experiences from the process may inspire other parks to develop their own programmes. In the second part of the chapter we take a quick look at two other Italian

parks dealing with ViP programmes and protected areas in Central and Eastern Europe and how they approach the task of attracting volunteers.

Volunteerism is not as new an idea in the region as it might seem, but parks and protected areas face multiple problems in programme development and implementation. Italy has gained considerable experience in developing successful programmes for involving local communities in the management of national parks and reserves using ViP, as in the NPALM or in the National Park of Gran Paradiso.

About motivations, setting and values of the ViP Programme in the NPALM

by Angelica Esposito

Why should people decide to be a volunteer for a few weeks? Who are they? What kind of experience do they have?

Let's make a hypothetical profile of the typical volunteer that takes part in the ViP.

We could say that she is a well educated female, still at school, around 22 years old and that she is volunteering for the first time. From 1993 until 2004, the majority of volunteers were female. Most of them were well-educated Italians. They were students between 19 and 30 years of age, and more than one-third of them had already been a volunteer.

Even though they could seem quite homogeneous, every group features many differences, including the reasons that they take part in this experience. In fact, among volunteers there are not only those who give their time to stand up for the environmental cause, but also those who decide to go through this experience because they believe that it is a good occasion to test themselves, to discover their personal strengths, and to surpass their limits. There are also those who simply consider the ViP a break from everyday chaos or routine.

But even for the latter, every action is performed with a great deal of dedication and responsibility. This is due to an adjustment of their point of view during the period of volunteerism. There are even those who say that, after this experience, they see their own life, job, and personal relations with new eyes. There are two main aspects to this phenomenon. One includes the environmental values that are transmitted inside of the group of volunteers and from the NPALM staff. In this culture there are some main concepts like respect, and cooperation.

Another aspect found to be very important in this programme is the social bond between volunteers. After living for days with other people and in nature, people are forced to face each other and to understand the importance of who and what are around them. Although the volunteers are often people that have never met before, the feelings of belonging to the group, an intensity of social relationships, and a sense of solidarity and reciprocity quickly emerge. Why does it happen? Of course, initially they are together because they have a common goal (contributing to the betterment of nature), but after a while it becomes also the satisfaction of being with others and of sharing.

There are some things that give volunteers a feeling of unity. The uniforms worn, for example, are a symbolic element that grants the volunteers a sense of solidarity. It represents a clear distinction between them and others. The setting in which the volunteer lives also gives a feeling of community and unity. It isolates the volunteers from the rhythms of the external world, and it puts them in an environment of simplicity.

In the NPALM in particular, the Casone Antonucci, an old farm from the 19th century that lodges most of the volunteers, plays a very important role. Its simple and genuine style becomes the symbol of the kind of life to which the volunteers aspire. The physical context becomes the place where they can express themselves without the fear of being judged and where they can understand more about their own possibilities and identity. Even if this particular kind of volunteerism does not go on for more than three weeks, for many volunteers it is not very different from other traditional volunteer service because it involves the same engagement.

The ViP programme provides an opportunity to learn much more about oneself and to develop. The volunteer learns about the tools with which he can live a more environmentally conscious life. The volunteer not only comes back home with more knowledge about how to defend and respect nature, but also becomes a key link between the park and society because he represents someone that passes on the knowledge of preventing dangerous actions onto others.

In any case, independent from their motivation many volunteers affirm that at the end of the programme they have received (from the calm and beauty of nature, from the altruism and generosity of the staff members and of the other volunteers) much more than what they have given. That sense of gratitude causes people to give back much more than they received, volunteering again in the future.

National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise

The National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise was established in October 1922 by a private initiative for the concession of approximately 500 hectares in the municipality of Opi (AQ). In August 1922 the first national field scout was organised in Val Fondillo, which came under the protected territory. This event

attracted more than 700 participants, lasted approximately 20 days and signalled the beginning of tourism development. The next year a Royal Decree established the National Park of Abruzzo.

It was in those years that, in order to answer to the numerous demands of participation from individuals and in the interests of promoting activities of education and interpretation, the national park organised the first groups of volunteers in the summertime. The project was called Green Team.

Later, in 1993, another organised programme was run for the entire year: On the Forehead of Nature.

The beginning of the project was facilitated by economic support from the Italian Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), which funded a two-year campaign called An Apple for the Bear. The project aimed to plant fruit trees in parts of the park, and this was done by the volunteers of On the Forehead of Nature. In the years since it has developed from a single programme for young people of averaging 24 years of age to eight different programmes and two in the planning phase. The volunteer programme involves Italian and foreign participants, and is based on the conviction that in this way it is possible to increase knowledge and cohesion on many important environmental topics in Europe.

The environmental themes have a global dimension. The park recognises the necessity of operating in the field of cultural exchange, to give younger generations a global perspective and show them that “green” activities can lead to a stable occupation that is profitable and not

harmful to the land. The volunteer service in the park is an important vehicle of environmental education and interpretation of nature and knowledge of the land. Moreover, it represents a great occasion to introduce the model of protection and conservation of natural assets, to explore scientific methods of research, and to display one of the most unique ecosystems in the world.

Finally, volunteer service is an encounter of social and cultural differences, providing experiences of great human value in a place that stirs emotions. It has allowed thousands of different people of different ages and social and cultural backgrounds, who would not have otherwise found a way to meet, cooperate and make a concrete contribution to conservation.

Protection of natural heritage is part of culture. Safeguarding values requires knowledge and respect for nature and fellow citizens. That is the reason why the programme, which is centred on environmental education and interpretation, can represent an important moment of exchange and cultural sensitivity.



Objectives of the programme

The volunteer programme has ambitious and varied objectives:

- to reflect on adopting “Earth friendly” behaviour through concrete participation in activities of the park and discovering the human role within ecosystems;
- to allow the people to work together in mutual understanding; to become part of nature and co-exist with and preserve species that live there;
- to stimulate interest in conservation through scientific and operational activities;
- to become team members and support the work of the park staff, including the routine and extraordinary requirements of the park (minor maintenance of buildings and paths, cleaning of areas frequented by tourists, assistance to staff, assistance to tourists, creation of garrisons in zones of important natural value, etc.);
- to create strong cohesion within the group by involving participants in the planning and management of the daily programme;
- to allow people to volunteer their time for environmental protection;
- to create a stable presence year round in the area in order to stimulate the local economy, especially during periods of low tourism;
- to obtain new ideas from the volunteers through dialogue, experience and exchange of information to increase capacity for improvements;
- to offer to the volunteer experience and acknowledge participation through certificates of participation, and agreements with schools and universities in order to add to their professional experience and to improve their prospects for further study and job opportunities;
- to create opportunities for interaction between the park bodies that mainly operate in the area (educational, surveillance, scientific, and technical experts) in order to stimulate the interdisciplinary approach to proper management of the protected area;
- to promote the local human activities of the park (handicrafts, agricultural tradition, food products, etc.) involving the volunteers to stimulate their curiosity to discover the ancient traditions of the areas;
- to stimulate the creation of a network for voluntary service in protected areas through the involvement of those who have participated in the programmes;
- to make agreements with ministries, universities, schools, associations, federations, organisations of the European Community or other countries, etc.;
- to give the voluntary service a distinct image through the use of a logo, t-shirt, and button for tourists to see;
- to adapt, to improve and to restructure buildings on abandoned, unused territory — making them “eco-compatible” with systems of alternative energy, recycling, water purification, etc.
- to produce photographic documents, collections, and banners in order to promote the idea and model of voluntary service to the park;

The National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise – a few numbers

The volunteer service in numbers indicates not only statistics but also data and phenomena that reflect the experience of the volunteers and the daily requirements of park conservation.

- Applications: over 2,000
- Participants: over 1,000
- Women: 59 percent
- Men: 41 percent
- Average age: 25 years
- Occupation:
60 percent — students,
5 percent — unemployed,
35 percent — workers (different positions)
- Country of origin: 87.9 percent Italy, 12.1 percent other countries (France, Canada, Spain, Germany, Japan, Switzerland and Jordan)

The National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise – one year of volunteering (continued)

- 365 days and nights of garrison activities spent in the shelters of the park
- 70 days dedicated to clean-up activities
- 1,000 kg of rubbish collected in the picnic areas and paths
- 2,000 kg of selected waste material in the structures of the volunteers during their stay
- 300 controls and garrisons in the vulnerable areas of the park
- 120 days supporting the staff in the visitor centres
- More than 100 days dedicated to park maintenance
- 40,000 litres of saved drinkable water in the volunteers' accommodations during their stay
- More than 500 excursions monitoring the territory
- 50 meetings dedicated to environmental education
- 40 collaborations with the scientific service (fauna censuses, research, etc.)
- 150 days of path maintenance

- to value and develop agricultural areas through sustainable projects involving volunteers;
- to do very simple but rigorous scientific research aimed to provide data about the protection of flora and fauna and to show that some behaviour which appears benign can in fact harm ecosystems; and
- to twin with other volunteer groups that have the same purposes in order to compare and exchange common experiences.

The NPALM has always worked with volunteers; every year hundreds of them participate in the programme from all over the world. The volunteers are students, environmentalists, researchers, teachers, professionals and retirees who freely contribute in different ways to the management of the national park.

Few people know about the nature volunteers structure. Those who do are mainly women and young people who silently and modestly take up the banner of environmental and social care which is needed every day to protect nature, and they do it with incredible efficiency and dedication.

Participation in the programmes of the volunteer service is open to all. It allows volunteers to spend time in nature, in perfect self-sufficiency and serenity, sharing with others the aspects of daily life and job experiences. Activities on the territory are carried out by dividing the volunteer group into patrols of two or three persons, whom the park supplies with equipment. They spend a period of seven, 14 or 21 days with other people motivated and interested in protecting the flora and fauna, collaborating with the park staff in the various activities of prevention, control, education,

attendance, maintenance and scientific research.

The volunteer project is divided into different programmes characterised by colour. Anyone who wants to participate and is at least 18 years old can take part in the Green Programme, which is for first-time park volunteers. Those older than 40 can take part in the Violet Programme, while the Blue Programme is for those who have already participated in the Green, Red or Violet programmes and want to repeat the experience. The Red Programme is directed at foreign participants, while the Azure is for family groups.

Organised groups such as scouts can participate in the Yellow Programme, even if they are under 18 years old. Participants in this programme are provided with two tutors. The Orange Programme is for middle and high schoolers, while the White Programme is for those who have already participated in one of the other programmes and want to manage their own group of volunteers in one of the shelters of the park.

Participation in the plan can happen year round, according to a special calendar. The park arranges accommodations and contributes to the daily boarding expenses (for the Green, Violet, Blue, Azure and Red programmes), and in exchange the volunteers carry out their activities during the chosen period.

Anyone interested in participating in a volunteer programme can send the park office the specific application form by mail or fax. On the park site it is common to find promotional materials and all the necessary information in order to understand what the plan is, how to get to the park and what to carry out with the staff. Subsequent to the communication of acceptance from the park, the volunteers selected will have to deposit a sum that constitutes a partial recovery of



expenses that the park supports to organise the events of the volunteer service (maintenance of the areas and shelters, attendance, material and documents, etc.).

The programme is developed based on the requirements and the age of the volunteer, for tasks such as patrol activities; fauna censuses; environmental education and interpretation; contact with the public; journalistic, photographic and television production for scientific research; radio interviews; reporting; special support for promotional activities (conventions, exhibitions, seminars and fairs); and activities with visitors. All these are performed under the supervision of the park staff.

Various accommodations are available for volunteers with different needs. They are subdivided into:

- Old country houses owned by the park, outside the villages, with big rooms and bunk beds, common kitchens and baths, space for meeting and reunions, fully equipped kitchens, tools and firewood, a meeting point with information for visitors managed by the volunteers, an educational garden, a composting area, and a garden with local vegetables from the park. The country homes are supplied with electric power, heated by wood stove and fireplace, supplied with non-potable running water, and a water purification point. This is the main kind of housing reserved for the volunteer programme.
- A hostel managed by the Educational Service, and situated in the village. It is a municipal property that was given to the park and has rooms with four beds

each, a bathroom, common kitchen, meeting room, electricity, centralised heating, and drinking water. There are functioning educational service offices and a small educational centre, an information point, and a park training school. This structure addresses needs of older participants, people with handicaps, families and those with schooling needs.

- Municipal facilities provided to the park with big rooms with bunk beds, common baths and kitchen, a big living room, centralised heating, warm water, and electricity generators. This building is used as an operations base for the voluntary service in the south part of the park and provides space for the volunteers.
- Simple shelters built in higher altitudes (property of the park). These are located in strategic places and are used as a temporary place for the staff patrolling in the area, or for volunteers on mission (usually only for one or a few nights). One room is offered with kitchen, fireplace, table and bunk beds (four or eight places), but no electricity, water, or bath.
- Camping areas. Camping zones exist for organised groups of volunteers (e.g. scouts, environmental associations), provided with baths, showers and running water. These are found on lands owned by the park, in strategic zones for patrolling territories far from the villages.

Volunteering options

Green Programme

Participation in the Green Programme is for those aged 18 to 40, and takes participants for periods of seven or 14 days. It is for people interested in protecting flora and fauna in one of the outposts of the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise. The group collaborates with operators, researchers, technicians and guards of the park in the various activities of prevention, control, education, attendance, maintenance and scientific research. Participation in the programme can take place at different times of the year, according to a precise calendar. The park provides lodging and contributes EUR 7 per day to boarding expenses. According to the service requirements, the volunteers will carry out: monitoring of the territory, maintenance of the paths, biodiversity censuses, activities of environmental education and interpretation, contacts with the public, special attendance to scientific research, maintaining radio contact, journalism, photographic and television reporting, and activities with the visitors, all under the supervision and coordination of the park staff.

Red Programme

This volunteer programme is for foreign participants. The initiative offers young people who deeply care about the environment a unique opportunity to work and live in contact with nature. They spend seven, 14 or 21 days together with other motivated and involved people at an outpost of the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise Park, working with park operators,

researchers, technicians and rangers in their various activities of prevention, control, education, assistance, maintenance and research.

To participate they must be over 18 years old and have some previous work experience in a natural environment. They must be able to live for an extended period in a mountain area, quietly and self-sufficiently in conditions that are sometimes difficult. This volunteer service is provided by a group of two or three persons equipped with radio telephones, a badge from the national park and basic equipment that allows them to carry out their activities.

This experience can be done throughout the year according to a park calendar. The park provides lodging and contributes EUR 7 per day to the costs of food, while the volunteer spends the period following the directions given by the park personnel. The most interesting roles are: patrol activities by telemetric methods, fauna and flora surveys, maintaining radio contact with the park rangers, assistance to the public, scientific work and research, photographic reporting, and special activities with very young visitors. All of these activities are carried out with the help and supervision of the park personnel.

Blue Programme

Participation in the Blue Programme requires previous participation in the Green, Red and Violet programme. The experience can be carried out during selected periods of the year, based on the park's special calendar. The park provides lodging and contributes EUR 7 per day to the costs of food.

Rates for participation in the voluntary service programmes: an example from the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise

Green Programme — young people at least 18 years of age, students or workers; EUR 80 one week, EUR 140 two weeks.

Blue Programme — prior participation in the Green Programme; EUR 110 one week, EUR 170 two weeks, EUR 230 three weeks.

Violet Programme — for those at least 40 years of age; EUR 110 one week, EUR 170 two weeks.

Red Programme — for foreign participants; EUR 110 one week, EUR 170 two weeks, EUR 230 three weeks.

Yellow Programme — for organised groups provided with shelter, EUR 5 per person per night plus expenses for gas and electric power. For camping volunteers, EUR 7 per night (in this programme there is no reimbursement from the park for board)

White Programme — prior participation in one of the other programmes and desire to independently manage a group term in one of the shelters of the park. Rates are: EUR 200 for at least 10 days, EUR 50 up to five participants, EUR 75 for six to 10 participants, EUR 100 for 11 to 15 participants, EUR 125 for 16 to 20, EUR 150 for 21 to 25. The money goes for materials and equipment (in this programme there is no reimbursement from the park for board).

Azure Programme — for families, one week long; EUR 110 per parent, EUR 80 per child.

Orange Programme — for the medium and advanced schools. Only one week: EUR 80.

Orange Programme

This is a volunteering and educational opportunity lasting seven days with other people interested in protecting flora and fauna in one of the park outposts. It involves collaboration with operators, researchers and technicians in activities such as fire prevention, control, information dissemination, education, attendance, maintenance and scientific research.

Participation in the Orange Programme can happen in late spring or summer. The park provides lodging and contributes EUR 7 per day to the costs of food.

The guest quarters offers basic accommodation. There are no televisions, telephones or video games that would distract from meaningful reflection, and there is a common kitchen in order to stimulate to encourage the participants to discover the pleasure of being with the other volunteers.

Azure Programme

During the 10th anniversary of the International European Year of the Family (promoted by the United

Nations), the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise has decided to promote, starting from 2004, a new initiative in order to offer families the experience of contact with an integral and uncontaminated natural atmosphere. The families spend a period of seven or 14 days protecting flora and the fauna, living in the guest quarters of the park in Villetta Barrea and collaborating with operators, researchers and technicians. The park supplies basic, yet indispensable equipment for the activities.

The Azure Programme is for family groups, not only parents and children, but also uncles and grandsons, grandfathers and grandsons, parents with sons and grandfathers, mother and child, father and child, and groups of siblings (so long as one is of age). The presence of the children characterises this experience and the activities of the programme are designed first of all to strengthen the relationships between the members of the families, with the aim of getting closer to nature, but also to create a special occasion to socialise within and outside of the family.

Participation can take place any time of the year according to a special calendar. The proposed activities

The volunteers rulebook

- Above all else, park volunteers should provide good examples to visitors, scrupulously respecting the park's by-laws.
- Volunteers should not take personal initiatives beyond those arranged by the Park Authority without being authorised by the park director.
- It is absolutely prohibited to bring relatives, friends or domestic animals to accompany the volunteer.
- The activities that the Park Authority sets out must be followed to the letter, respecting instructions and timetables.
- Volunteers must ensure their presence and services to the Park Authority for the agreed period.
- While in service it is prohibited to smoke.
- The Park Authority will supply the volunteer with materials to use in his or her role there, and these must be returned at the end of the stay in perfect condition.
- Any damages to park property will be charged to those responsible.
- Two or three volunteers make up a park patrol. All of the patrol groups appoint one volunteer who is responsible for keeping the money needed to buy food for the group.
- If a park volunteer is unable to complete his period of service, he has no rights to claim his further share of the food money, which is automatically returned to the Park Authority.
- The volunteer undertakes to scrupulously respect his personal hygiene, as well as that of the buildings and areas he works in.
- The volunteer should behave in a polite and professional way with his colleagues and with the public.
- The uniform and badge worn by each volunteer should be kept clean and orderly, and the badge should be clearly visible.
- The Park Authority does not assume responsibility for damages or accidents caused by volunteers.
- The volunteer must pay for his insurance upon arrival in Italy.
- The insurance payment will not be reimbursed should the volunteer decide to give up the period of service.
- Should the volunteer behave in a way which the Park Authority considers disrespectful of the park by-laws, the Park Authority holds the right to immediately suspend or expel the volunteer from the service.

From the diary of a volunteer

Some reflections and considerations were written down by the volunteers in one of the many diaries kept in the guest rooms (Casone Antonucci) in the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise. It is an example of the enormous emotional impact that this experience has on volunteers.

January 13, 2002

"This is the last evening. I didn't read what the others wrote because I did not want to be sadder. I do not know what to write, because it is all confused, I feel displeasure, and I didn't count on the term ending. I am returning home, to the city, to lessons, to traffic, to noises. It is still all amassing without order in my head. Some day everything will enter the drawers of my memory and then I will be able to go inside and find unforgettable moments, true, full of emotions. New experiences, instructions, colours, smells, noises, people. It is too early to make an account and to tell the history of my term in the park. I would like to but I am not able.

I have written another time in this diary, but I believe that I cannot explain well in these pages everything I have experienced here. I need a recorder of emotions and thoughts in real time to explain my feelings. Also the simpler things, the juice of life, have been intense, 800 km from your house, from your family, from your life. And it is just the life that you find here, simple but full, that you would like to live for eternity, that you wish for everybody.

I cannot even express completely the estimation that is born and growth of some people: they are completely available for other people and they believe in them (...) the great things do not count, however not only those. They are the smiles, the confidence, the slaps on the shoulders, the counselling, the understanding, the instructions, the explanations, the availability, the generosity. They have provided during this time a human experience to learn, to take advantage of and to consider as an example (...)"

Beppe

June 15, 2002

"We have unfortunately arrived to the end of these magnificent 15 days in the park. A new, unforgettable experience that will mark our future. The magic of these places, the sharing of emotions, experiences and moments of life will make us leave the park with tears in our eyes. Thanks to all the companions of adventure for the wonderful moments spent with you between these mountains. One day we will meet again in other forests to breathe the scent of the Earth and the song of the water."

Raoul

July 27, 2002

"Anywhere you are if you want to be at peace with yourself, leave meaningful traces in the way of existence. The park, with all its wonders, offers the opportunity for you to reflect and find the proper path in your life."

Maria Rita
Scout group

are organised in order to favour participation of the whole group — adults and children alike — under the supervision and coordination of the park staff. The under-age participants are always entrusted to the care and responsibility of the relatives for the duration of the volunteer service.

Free time is provided to discover the area and local culture. The activities include:

- trekking in nature, from the river to the forest;
- patrol of the territory through simple excursions;
- botanical and fauna censuses and observance of scientific research;
- observation of the mammals, learning to recognise traces and signs of presence;
- contact with the public and activities with the visitors;
- visits to the villages, the visitor centres and the fauna areas of the park;
- small acts of maintenance and gardening;
- waste collection and cleaning of the paths;
- cooking in the kitchen (shared with other volunteers) and washing up;
- participation in the educational programmes for sustainable lifestyle and the use of resources (selected collection, correct use of the electric power and the water, etc.); and
- activities of environmental education and interpretation.

White Programme

The National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise wants to grant an extraordinary opportunity to all persons who have participated in the volunteer programme and were distinguished for their passion, seriousness, and desire to work for the park. The programme aims to let the volunteers manage a term, with other people interested in the protection of the flora and the fauna. Housing is provided in a shelter of the park situated outside the area frequented by tourists, and terms last 10 days in periods of minimal tourism. One volunteer in the group is designated tutor for the period.

The tutor manages, temporarily, the structure of the park. He or she agrees:

- to maintain contact with the park, sending the appropriate application form for the White Programme;
- to organise his own term, contacting the participants (also under-age) and to communicate the regulations and the modalities of participation;
- to organise an work programme to develop with the participants;
- to settle on a programme of activity in collaboration with the park and to communicate in advance about any visits to centres or museums of the park during the term;
- to collect the documentation, equipment and education marks of the volunteer, all of which will be used exclusively for the purposes of the voluntary service and will be returned to the volunteers in perfect condition at the end of their service;
- to inform the park about the day of arrival of participants and to provide a directory of participants written up in the appropriate format;
- to stipulate an appropriate insurance policy for possible accidents or damages;
- to write up a report to deliver the park agency containing a description of the volunteers' activities, how fauna and flora were protected, suggestions for management improvements, etc.
- to set up a fund from participants' contributions for an amount of:
 - EUR 50 for groups of up to five participants;
 - EUR 75 for groups of six to 10 participants;
 - EUR 100 for groups of 11 to 15 participants;
 - EUR 125 for groups of 16 to 20 participants; and
 - EUR 150 for groups of more than 20 participants.
- to acquire, at the beginning of the term, material for upkeep (tools, varnishes, etc.) in order to contribute to the routine maintenance of the shelter.

Purchase of the materials will be made by the tutor in coordination with the park authorities.

Other stipulations include the following:

- The volunteer will take part in the term.
- Volunteer terms in the White Programme can be repeated.
- The group must be completely self-sufficient in terms of lodging, board, cleaning, heating, drinking water supply, expenses, firewood and movement.
- During the term, visits to the centre and to the museums are free for the whole group.
- The shelter may be shared with other groups.
- The park staff looks after the volunteers' living quarters but the responsibility of the group is always assigned to the volunteer tutor.

Violet Programme

Participation is for those 40 years and older. Volunteer terms can take place at any time of the year, based on the special calendar. The park provides lodging in single or double rooms with bath and contributes EUR 7 per day for boarding expenses.

Yellow Programme

The Educational Service of the National Park, following a strategy of environmental education and interpretation, organises the stay of the groups through special programmes. To this end it has instituted the Fields of Yellow Voluntary Service, which runs throughout the year. The programme aims to educate participants in the conservation of nature through daily engagement and the acquisition of new habits and behaviour. The operators of the park, in collaboration with the tutor of the group, elaborate an activity programme that comprises knowledge and information acquisition through theoretical and practical lessons, excursions of various duration and difficulty, presentations, visits to informational and educational facilities in the park (e.g. visitors centres and fauna areas), provision of information to the public, maintenance of routes and paths, and nature observations.

Behaviour in the field

- The underage participants are admitted to the camp only if accompanied by a responsible person.
- It will be part of the responsibility of the group to guard the premises provided by the park to prevent possible damages to buildings.
- The presence of the responsible guide or the responsible substitute of the group is an indispensable condition of the development of the field.



- When in the field, participants are asked to respect the rules in the park.
- Violations of park rules are to be reported to the park management.
- During control activities and contact with the public, it is important to exhibit the utmost politeness and courtesy.
- It is forbidden to light fires outside appropriately equipped and authorised areas. Camping is permitted only in authorised areas.
- During the development of the field, the group must be available for the park, in order to lend assistance when necessary.
- The group and individual participants alike must be completely self-sufficient in terms of lodging, board, drinking water, expenses, firewood, cleaning, heating, and movement.
- The structures and service areas will have to be cleaned up and put in order.
- Firewood must be collected in accordance with the regulations of the given park or from retailers.
- Whichever method, programme, plan or activity is involved, resources must be conserved in a sustainable way.
- Selective waste collection must be planned and practiced.
- Leftover food at the end of the activity must be brought back or left for other groups.
- For safety reasons, those responsible for the group will carry out continuous surveillance in the assigned area.
- Every participant receives a symbol of the park.
- The timetables of arrival and departure of the group are established with the operators of the park.

- During the activities in the park it is necessary to respect the silence during excursions and especially after sunset and before sunrise.
- In order to avoid erosion and other problems, it is against the rules to dig holes or ditches.
- Park helpers serve park visitors and ensure the best presentation of the protected area.

For more information, please visit:

www.parcoabruzzo.it, or contact:

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Fax: (39-86) 489-132

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Other Italian experiences

Gran Paradiso National Park

The Gran Paradiso National Park started the initiative Fields of Experience some years ago. It is a chance for young people to collaborate with the park through a formative activity of life in nature. The initiative is carried out in summer and invites people to participate actively in the initiatives promoted by the park.

The programme involves people with good experience in trekking, in environmental education and in nature presentation. When there are many applications, preference is given to students who have graduated or are studying science (natural sciences, forestry sciences, agricultural sciences, veterinary science, etc.) or to



those engaged actively in protecting the environment.

The terms are 15 days long, starting in July and ending in August. Every term has a tutor. When it is not possible to organise the first term in July because of an insufficient number of participants, two short terms are organised on July weekends. For this reason, in the application form availability is required only for long terms, rather than for the weekends.

The activities of the volunteers are developed within the park management, for tourist information and conservation of the natural attractions of the park. The service consists of:

- support of the staff in the visitors centres, to learn how to relate with the public;
- exploration of the main tourist routes of the park's territory;
- providing information to the public in places of tourist interest during activities and events;
- sign posting on the main tourist routes and paths to inform tourists about the rules of the protected area;
- collaboration with the park staff environmental education;
- collection of data on tourist flows and participation of the public in various initiatives; and
- maintenance of paths and green areas, in collaboration with other local agencies.

During the development of the first two kinds of activities, the tutor will estimate the trekking abilities of the participants and their personal attitudes. Based on this, the tutor will delegate the assignments between groups. Activities related to scientific research are not offered because these activities require trained staff who are experts on the territory.

Guest quarters are park property equipped to accommodate people or groups who collaborate with the park (on photographic or journalistic research, articles, etc.) or special guests on official visits. They are therefore representative structures which need to be kept clean and tidy. The buildings are equipped with beds, mattresses, blankets, pillows, closets, kitchens equipped with dish, and baths.

The only material to bring is for personal use: sheets or sleeping bags, towels, and board. Before coming to the volunteer camp, it is obligatory to attend a training day in Turin at the headquarters of the park, including before every long term (for the weekends, terms begin on Saturday morning). This is not necessary for those who have already spent a term at the camp. The training day is meant to give to the volunteers materials and information necessary to provide the services.

For security, participants require climbing boots or

trekking shoes, and a medium-size rucksack. Dress for the mountain should always be in layers (shirt, pullover, fleece and rain jacket) in case of changes in the weather, which in summer are frequent. Heavy sweaters, winbreakers, caps, waterproof gloves, and rain hat are indispensable.

Participants who come inadequately equipped could be limited to duties carried out in the valley. Binoculars and cameras are also handy. Participants pay a fee of EUR 30 per long term and EUR 12 per weekend for insurance and logistical expenses. This deposit is not returned if the participant vacates the camp.

For more information, please visit:

www.pngp.it or contact the Park Headquarters at (124) 90-1070, by fax (124) 901-070 or by e-mail at: info@pngp.it (Messages should include the sender's telephone number).

Volunteer service of the National Park of Archipelago Toscano

In the National Park of Archipelago Toscano volunteers are used to monitor wild fauna. It very often happens that some activities require a remarkable amount of manpower, more than what is available from the institutional staff. Normally the activities are important for training in the field of fauna management.

Activity: census of wild ungulate populations.

The activities are included in programmes of management of the wild ungulates. For this activity the park prefers to involve participants that have already carried out such activities. It is important to be familiar with the animal monitored and the area, and to have suitable equipment (binoculars or telescope). The operation goes on for a few days. The park pays the expenses of accommodation and travel (ferry to the islands). Volunteers are usually students in naturalistic or biological disciplines or are environmental guides. Volunteers have been recruited through agencies, environmental associations, and universities.

Activity: capture of animals

Volunteers have been included in the Life-Nature Project for controlling the population of felines on Pianosa Island. The volunteers are coordinated by a responsible person to capture felines with traps.

Volunteers over 18 years of age were recruited through the Internet site for terms of one week. Travel and accommodation were covered by the park.

The critical points of the programme include:

- It is necessary to have expert staff who follow activities in the field and coordinate the amateur volunteers.
- Cases of volunteers quitting can jeopardise the success of the activities; for this reason, it is necessary to have a list of reserve volunteers ready to partici-

pate at the last minute.

- Guest rooms must be available in order to guarantee the lodging of the volunteers at the sites. The logistical aspects play a fundamental role on the islands where, in high tourist season, it is not possible to guarantee the availability of lodgings.

For more information, please visit:

www.islepark.it

Exploring volunteerism in Central and Eastern Europe – snapshot overview

The idea of volunteerism is not as new to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as it may appear. National parks and protected areas in many countries in the region were for years trying to involve volunteers in many aspects. However, in the former centralised regimes it was often understood by people as an “obligation” to participate and during the economic transformation people often faced many social and economic challenges preventing them from participating. In the last few years there have again been attempts to develop and run volunteer programmes based on local traditions and experiences.

For illustrations we will use the volunteer programmes from the Szenas Hills Buda Protected Landscape Area, Hungary, and from the Slovak Paradise National Park in Slovakia. Examples mentioned here do not represent any general picture or a broad account of types and scope of such activities, they merely provide examples of two approaches in CEE which in combination with the case of Italian national parks may inspire readers of the guidelines when developing or modifying their own volunteer programmes.

LIFE Nature Project in the Szenas Hills, Hungary

The Szenas Hills belong to the Buda Protected Landscape Area and were declared a European Diploma Site in 1995. The site is located near Budapest between the villages of Nagykovacs and Piliszentivan. The site covers an area of 1,749 hectares. A large proportion — 1,187 ha — constitutes the core area under strict protection and holding the European Diploma of the Council of Europe. The site also includes a 562-ha buffer zone, which is protected as part of the Buda Hills Landscape Protection Area. In August 2003 the park management started the Restoration of Pannonic Forests and Grasslands on the Szenas-Hills project, which is to run until August 2008.

For decades the site has faced several threats, most

of which are of human origin. The main threats include:

- deforestation and overgrazing – until the first half of the 20th century – resulting in severe erosion;
- establishment of exotic tree plantations of Austrian Pine (*Pinus nigra*) and Black Locust (*Robinia pseudo-acacia*) – from the beginning of the 20th century until the late 1950s;
- overstocked game population (large herbivores) and the introduction of exotic game species (*Ovis musimon*) – until recent years – for hunting purposes;
- intensive development of the broader region and the expansion of residential areas into the buffer zones of the protected area — continues today; and
- tourism and other recreation activities (e.g. off-road motorcycling, horseback riding).

The project addresses most of these threats. It focuses on habitat restoration, reduction of game populations, elimination of populations of mutton deer (*Ovis musimon*) and fallow deer (*Cervus dama*) — the two most destructive exotic game species — as well as carrying out several monitoring and research programmes.

The project is also aimed at strengthening management infrastructure and implementing environmental education activities. Guided tours are provided for visitor groups, two interpretative nature trails have been constructed to present natural assets to children and other visitors, a nature conservation exhibition has been organised on the premises of the project coordination office, and postgraduate trainings are provided to biology teachers. Opening the work of the project team to the interested public and involving volunteers in conservation work are also important elements of the project.

As a special component of the project, the volunteer programme is led by a full time nature educator employed by the National Park Directorate. Her main role is to maintain contacts, organise programmes and contribute technical assistance and guidance to volunteers. The park authority provides tools, gauntlets and other protection facilities, organises transport of volunteer groups and gives technical guidance. Under the professional guidance of the park staff, volunteers perform a wide range of work. They build fences to prevent off-road motorbike riding, install information boards, renew nature trails, collect rubbish, cut Austrian pine saplings growing in grasslands, collect oak acorns to be used later for forest regeneration, cut black locust shoots and plant saplings.

Volunteers are mostly school groups, sometimes working communities from companies (interested individuals are involved on rare occasions). Some work is carried out by community workers (unemployed peo-



ple obliged to spend some of their time doing occasional community work). It is relatively easy to recruit volunteer groups because there is such high interest in this activity. The most common entry points are the information and contacts presented on the project website and school teachers involved in trainings organised by the project. Unlike in most other locations of the park directorate, at this site there is a rather good infrastructure for organising volunteer programmes. As a result, most groups expressing interest in such contributions are directed to the management of the site.

Although the volunteer programme is a great contribution to the park, there are also a few challenges and problems. It requires a great deal of organisation (e.g. the initial visit to the site, forming groups, precisely defining tasks so that they are both easy and rewarding, providing tools and ensuring they are returned). Some-

times groups are rather big and difficult to manage (an ideal group has six to eight members). When groups are brought in based on the decision of their leader (e.g. teacher), members are insufficiently personally motivated and they may do more harm than good. Some tasks are seasonal and can be difficult, requiring special care, equipment, and attitudes.

However, potential benefits are significant. Although costs are almost the same as when the work is done by professionals — volunteers are not a cheap labour force — there are other benefits. For instance, volunteers may focus on tasks not popular among professionals (e.g. collecting acorns). Yet the most significant advantage is that their involvement is an important element of nature education, and in the long term it increases local ownership and responsibility.

Slovak Paradise National Park, Slovakia

Slovak Paradise National Park is one of the most popular protected areas for visitors in the country. The park is situated in the eastern part of Slovakia. In 1964 it was proclaimed a protected landscape area and in 1988 it was re-categorised by the government as a national park. The park covers an area of 198 sq km and has a protected zone of 130 sq km.

The area is rich in fauna and flora. Species include rare ones such as the brown bear, the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), the common kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) and the black stork (*Ciconia nigra*). Quite common are red deer and wild boars. Important Slovak endemites in the area are the Carpathian harebell (*Campanula carpatica*), the Slovak anemone (*Pulsatilla slavica*), *Hesperis silvestris*, *Liguria sibirica*, and *Saxifraga paniculate*.

The park is covered by forests and the park faces great danger from illegal logging. This is the area for which the volunteer programme was designed. In this case, management of the park, together with local NGOs, attempted to address (through the volunteers programme) involvement of the marginalised and poor people from the park buffer zone into the management of the natural resources and protection of forests from illegal activities.

For people in the under-developed region, the natural area surrounding their settlement and belonging mostly to the state is an important source of resources and income. It could be, for instance, mushroom and berry collection, timber and illegal logging, illegal harvests on state and private agricultural lands or landfill raids and metal collection. However, these activities

are often sources of conflict between marginalised communities and the protected area. They may generate tension and conflicts, which may damage natural resources and undermine nature protection.

Roma from the marginalised settlement of Letanovce live in the buffer zone of Slovak Paradise National Park. Their main source of energy for heating and cooking is firewood. The Roma shantytown of Letanovce has around 55 dwellings (mostly houses and huts) housing roughly 700 people. The shantytown, five kilometres from the rest of the village, has no electricity, water, sewage or transportation. The Roma are no longer allowed to collect firewood in the forest, a right they enjoyed until the Slovakian government declared the forest a national park. Police patrolled the forest to stop Roma from collecting kindling. However, this approach was not very effective, and only contributed to tension between the park and the people.

The national park authorities, together with NGOs, developed a volunteer programme focused on park protection and public involvement. Oppression by police was replaced by a "Roma civic guard" ("obcianska straz") project. The idea is to involve Roma in the protection of the national park against illegal logging. The Roma now have the possibility to buy firewood from local authorities for a reasonable price. Volunteers from the community take part in the Roma civic guard and protect the national park against illegal logging.

Without external intervention by the state and NGO pressure, there may have been irreversible environmental damage. Poverty, lack of education or disillusionment with one's individual prospects shape attitudes towards the environment.



Developing volunteer programmes



To develop a good ViP programme, the first necessary step is assessment of local conditions. Secondly comes training on how to build capacities of protected-area staff members in developing the programme.

Assessment of local conditions

The feasibility study will evaluate conditions, technical capacity and managerial capacity of the parks and will design a working plan for programme implementation tailored to specific conditions and opportunities for volunteer involvement.

Development of a voluntary service for nature programme requires some fundamental elements:

- The organisation (protected area, NGO, environmental agency, etc.) should be ready to take on external collaborators who are not employees within the managerial structure; the organisation must be flexible enough to establish collaboration and synergies with the territory, with such resources as offices, trained staff and flexible timetables to respond to volunteers' requirements.
- The territory must be prepared to collaborate with organisations and stakeholders in such a plan, to be open to accepting data, to integrate its competences into the project. It is also very important to have an idea of cultural diversity.



- The territory, in terms of buildings, must possess necessary equipment. To this end, it is preferable that the structures are property of the public, the agency manager or another public agency of the municipality, province, region, etc. The accommodations available to volunteers must be adapted in accordance with the needs of the particular programmes of the voluntary service: For seniors, those with school children and families, there must be individual rooms, a stocked kitchen, running as well as stream water, and electricity. For the other programmes, it is important to provide separate rooms for boys and girls, one minimally equipped kitchen, a source of potable water, stream water, warm water, and shower.
- Necessary expenses include:
 - management expenses (costs of staff, offices, equipment, promotional material, documentation of activities by video, photos, newspapers, Internet, etc.);
 - food for volunteers;
 - maintenance expenses; and
 - clothing and equipment, including uniforms for the volunteers, tools, motor vehicles for transport of materials and volunteers, and first aid gear.

Volunteers' uniforms consist of a sweater and a forest green T-shirt with the logo of the park and the insignia "VOLUNTEER." Volunteers can also wear uniforms from the park's educational service. These simple and comfortable clothes are very practical for work and hikes while making volunteers easily recognisable. Additionally, the volunteers identify themselves with the park for which they work, developing a sense of belonging and pride for the project in which they are involved.

For volunteers, radios are much more useful than mobile phones, in which the conversation is between two people only. With radio, dialogue is heard simultaneously by all volunteers in the territory, allowing more effective communication as information travels faster due to the greater opportunity for interaction and participation between all those participating in the volunteer service. The technical disadvantage of radio is the unstable connection in areas without proper coverage.

Guidelines for staff behaviour

- Members of volunteer staff will respect park rules and regulations.
- Staff should remember that volunteers are hosts and friends and should not be made to feel like intruders or that they are incapable, but to be involved in the life of the park.
- Staff members must set a positive example for volunteers.
- Profane or otherwise unsuitable language must not be used, and respect must be given to all people with regard to religion, ideology, opinion, and sexual preference.
- Staff must maintain professional behaviour, and must avoid interpersonal relationships which result in possible exclusion of other volunteers.
- The main objective of voluntary service is to allow volunteers to reflect on daily personal behaviour in respecting others, nature and the beings which are part of it; in order to achieve this objective, staff members should live in harmony with nature.
- All programmes of the voluntary service must have a specific objective, and every activity must be tied in with attainment of such a purpose.
- Staff should show confidence in carrying out their work to avoid sending messages of inability or insecurity.
- They should avoid eating on every occasion with volunteers, though it is important to use this occasion at the end of the programme, in order to verify the harmony of the group, providing suggestions for general organisation and location.
- Cleaning activities are never to be planned by staff.
- Relationships between staff members must be sincere and not derogatory; interpersonal problems must be discussed and solved.
- Do not gossip about other staff members or colleagues with volunteers.
- Staff of the voluntary service must not discuss problems regarding the volunteer group or complaints about the job with colleagues.
- Staff availability must be total, without consideration to time, distance, weather conditions, etc.
- Staff should inform volunteers about the programme and any schedule changes so they can be prepared mentally and materially.
- They should ensure that all volunteers have returned from outdoor activities, especially long excursions; and ensure that they are provided with necessary gear to communicate, to self-orient, to shelter themselves, to eat, and to drink.
- Key to volunteers and to the programme is a friendly reception organised professionally by experienced staff.
- Staff of the voluntary service must maintain humility: The Park is the only protagonist!
- Staff should not smoke within park premises, while in uniform, or in the presence of volunteers.
- They should avoid excessive alcohol consumption.
- Staff should be punctual and precise; should tardiness be unavoidable, they should make advance notice and apologise.
- They should not be negative but seek solutions, recognising problems will always arise; they should project a positive attitude in order to create harmony with the people, living creatures and things that surround us.
- Do not bring outsiders on park premises or into the volunteer group; the same rule applies to volunteers.
- Staff should not speak using the regional dialect except in extreme cases when the local language absolutely must be used to make conversation understandable.
- They should respect working hours, and not speak about matters inconsequential to the job.
- Mobile phones should be used in moderation.
- Staff should never hide the truth from volunteers; when a matter cannot be discussed for work reasons, they should say nothing.
- Uniforms must be worn with pride to reflect professionalism, a sense of belonging, and the sharing of a mission.
- During activities involving volunteers and colleagues, staff must exhibit the utmost gentility and courtesy.
- Staff should respect quiet times during excursions, volunteers' rest periods, after sunset and before sunrise.
- Staff should tidy documents in offices, equipment in laboratories, material at points of sale, etc. after each use.
- Energy should be conserved by switching off lights when not in use; by recycling and reusing; and by using service vehicles as little as possible.
- Service cars should not be used for personal purposes, and, when they are used, road rules should be respected.

Two weeks of volunteering: a sample programme

Monday: welcome day

Volunteers are expected to arrive. It is possible to wait for them at the bus stop or in front of the centre entrance, should they arrive by car. After arrival, they will be accompanied to the centre where the kitchen, services and bedrooms are shown, and volunteers are invited to choose a place. In the entrance hall of the centre, a blackboard shows a few words of welcome, recommending that the first meeting will be held at 4 p.m. that night, involving the recording of the mission document, designation of treasurer, and delivery of board. Shopping in the nearest village will close this first day.

Tuesday: presentation day

Presentation day begins early, at approximately 8 a.m. There will be discussion on all matters that the volunteers will deal with in the national park, with every volunteer speaking on his specific topic. It might be nice to have a bagged lunch outside, depending on weather conditions. The day finishes with division of the volunteers into patrols, handing out of uniforms, equipment, instruments of communication, and the programme.

Wednesday: welcome morning - afternoon of the ant

The first patrol team is already encamped at the shelter on the Camosciara Mountain path. The others start a trekking tour at 9:15 a.m. The staff will bring volunteers' lunch and picnicking gear. A sensory exercise for environmental interpretation will be carried out after lunch, and then all return to the centre. In the afternoon everyone will attend to provision of food and firewood in the centre, organisation of the kitchen, cleaning rooms, preparing supper. The group will organise a rotating schedule for daily chores such as cooking, cleaning up, etc.

Thursday: excursion

Day dedicated to fauna and to observing signs of presence.

Friday: adventure day

Excursion on a route chosen by the volunteers.

Saturday: day of service

In the evening, hold a "sharing moment" to discuss activities done in the past days, impressions and desires.

Sunday: dependent on requirements of service

Examples may include attending to museum visitors or outdoor paths.

Monday: morning clean up

Every patrol team is assigned a zone to clear of refuse; all bags are collected, and the patrol's collection is checked. On this day, there is a change of the patrols, and a meeting will be held in order to discuss problems and answer questions.

Tuesday: dependent on requirements of service

Wednesday: excursion

After the rail service, an excursion begins at 9:15; participants are given a bagged lunch. An interesting excursion might be to hike the unmarked paths, to give a sense of adventure and to underline the singularity of the volunteer service.

Thursday: dependent on requirements of service

Friday: embellishment of the centre

This day is dedicated to embellishment of the centre and the surrounding area, for which every patrol will have a very specific task.

Saturday: day of environmental education

All volunteers, provided bagged lunch, are involved in practical activities of environmental education. In the afternoon, they will reflect on the experience and the personal meaning of environmental ethics and sustainable behaviour together.

Sunday

This is the final day for volunteers at the centres and museums, a day to bid the park farewell.

The afternoon is dedicated to final verification and is indispensable. In the evening, all dine together, in order to exchange final impressions about the volunteer period.

Two weeks of volunteering: a sample programme (continued)

Monday: departure day

Today, the programme will close after the handing in of tickets and receipts to justify expenses, returning equipment, etc. Individual departures happen at different times of the day. Staff will accompany those leaving to the departure point. This is an important moment, as it forms a bridge to the future.

Cleaning schedule and duties: Such activities are carried out daily by volunteers on a rotating schedule. Duties include cleaning of the premises (entrance hall, kitchen, corridors, grounds, etc.), cooking, and shopping for the group.

Individual assignments: These duties are carried out in “free” time or whenever demanded by the programme. An example is provided below.

Gilda	Information centre and selling point
Luciana	Reduction of consumption: water, electric power, sustainable expenses, etc. Management of volunteer cases.
Silvia	Separated waste collection
Alessandra	Cleaning of the road and the river bank near the centre
Margherita	Information centre and selling point
Pietro	Separated collection
Mario	Help clean the guest building with Brunella and Angelica.

Useful tip: Activities can be scheduled seasonally in order to create a programme and calendar for the whole year. This phase is important for the secretariat because prospective participants often ask what kind of activities are done in the period of their availability.

Capacities of key stakeholders and training

The focus is on the “train-the-trainers approach.” The following guidelines should help to train responsible or interested people on how to start up and to manage ViP programmes in protected areas:

- People working directly with volunteers should number at least two (in order to meet different requirements of volunteers, they should be of varying ages and include at least one male and one female and one young and one mature person). They should be able to work in harmony with colleagues and the volunteer group. These people should be available outside normal working hours and on holidays, and must always have very clear objectives and good organisational skills.
- Voluntary service is based on a concrete plan to reach the real necessities of the park territory and its people. In order to motivate the presence of volunteers, it is important to always clarify, plan, agree upon, and realise activities.

In planning a training programme for staff that will manage the volunteer service, the following objectives must be considered:

- increasing sensitivity and fostering values connect-

ed with voluntary service for nature;

- supplying park managers with information from the voluntary service;
- allowing staff a true experience of volunteering;
- supplying methodology and instruments of communication, interpretation and education;
- supplying methodologies and instruments for the management of group dynamics, for development of personal abilities, and for public communication;
- supplying information regarding scientific, natural, historic and traditional aspects of the territory in which the voluntary service plan is carried out; and
- developing cohesion and harmony among staff.

In order to realise these objectives, the following should be developed:

- activities related to firsthand experience of nature (e.g. excursions of three or four days with educational activities to acclimatise);
- collaboration between staff and park employees;
- a programme for volunteering tailored for the staff who work with volunteers full-time;



- organisation of workshops and lessons on area history and traditions (meeting with local seniors, shepherds, craftsmen, hunters, experts etc.); and
- training for volunteers to conduct activities that they will carry out, such as welcoming and presenting the programme, preparation of timetables, development of practical activities, etc.

Starting a volunteer programme

The volunteer programme begins with an application form from the interested person (or group) at the operations centre of environmental education. At that time, the centre checks the possibility of receiving the volunteer based on availability. The park does not demand a specific curriculum or ability from volun-

SWOT analysis of the volunteer programme for nature

Strengths	Weaknesses
1a) Availability of accommodations that provide visitors with essential equipment and allow them to stay in the midst of nature in structures that are architecturally harmonised with the environment and sustainable from an energy-use perspective.	1a) Infrastructure and buildings cannot meet the expectations and lifestyles of all participants if they are not well-informed before arrival and throughout the term of service.
1b) Varied structures to meet the different requirements of participants; for example, simple but comfortable guest rooms situated in the village suitable for seniors, families and school participants.	1b) Absence of adequate structures for a wide range of age groups.
2) Varied volunteer programmes to allow regular participants and special groups (e.g. families, various specialised school classes) to participate in a plan of conservation and collaborate with park staff on management of nature.	2) Lack of contingency plans for unforeseen requirements.
3) Strong educational plan on values, know-how and experiences connected to nature.	3) Lack of educational environmental activities in the programmes.
4) A true, collaborative and continuous relationship with the land that lasts beyond the term of service, and brings back volunteers and funding associations.	4) Lack of integration and collaboration with the territory.
5) A natural and organised context that facilitates interpersonal relationships and helps overcome relational difficulties, based on shared values and experiences.	5) Lack of meaningful experiences in nature and moments people can share in the programme.
6) A plan that transmits ideas and values that contribute practically to conservation of nature.	6) A programme without specific ideas and objectives and with unidentifiable values.
7) Provision of a flow of visitors to the territory beyond traditional tourist seasons.	7) Lack of continuous flow, with a concentration of volunteers at peak tourist periods.
8) Specialised park staff for the programme.	8) Staff insufficiently trained to manage the plan.

teers, but only the desire to participate, and selects participants based on the order in which applications are received.

Following this step, the centre sends confirmation to the petitioner with all detailed information regarding destination and exact timetable of the appointment; necessary material to bring along; the information on the activities that will be carried out in that period (this is generally communicated by mail, telephone or both). The aim is to supply participants with sufficient information to address any likely concern or question). This is a crucial part of the process, because it is the first direct contact between volunteer and organising staff and will make an important impression.

The volunteer definitively confirms his participation in the programme with deposit through a postal account and the communication of this transaction. When the volunteer arrives at the park, he/she will find an operator on duty who introduces the other volun-

teers, arranges his/her lodging and supplies him/her with introductory information on logistics of the centre.

On the afternoon of the day of arrival, all volunteers will be united for the first meeting with the responsible staffer, who explains the plan, motivations, values and tasks of the voluntary service; the group designates a treasurer who will be responsible for the contributions for board (for example, EUR 7 per day). The welcoming phase lasts two days, and will supply volunteers with all basic information required to carry out with autonomy and responsibility all programme tasks. The third day starts the operating phase: Volunteers divided in groups of two or three and equipped with radio and mobile telephone to carry out the activities in the area, as established in a detailed programme.

SWOT analysis of the volunteer programme for nature

Opportunities

- 1a) The structure and its functionality help volunteers to reflect on the use of resources and materials and to develop a sustainable lifestyle.
- 1b) Acceptance for the various requirements of volunteers and developing the possibility to widen the scope of participants.
- 2) Involvement of more and more people in the conservation plan.
- 3) Provision of the opportunity to reflect and to teach adults who otherwise would not have access to environmental education.
- 4) Building of relationships between volunteers and locals through collaboration, exchange of viewpoints and making of acquaintances.
- 5) Demonstration of the social context of life and reflection on the environmental and social aspects of volunteers' homes; reflection on lifestyles and interpersonal relationships.
- 6) Strong competitiveness with other forms of tourism and creation of a vacation alternative in which free time is used in a meaningful and constructive way.
- 7) Development of a 12-month plan guaranteeing an economic contribution all year long, crucial for the park's smaller communities that base their economy on tourism.
- 8) Possibility of further staff specialisation in continuous and dialectic relationship with volunteers.

Threats

- 1a) If the philosophy of structure and vision is not well communicated in advance and the participants are uneducated on topics like recycling, use of drinking water as a precious resource, etc., volunteers will perceive their accommodation as uncomfortable and insufficient.
- 1b) Uneasiness of participants and the lack of accommodation for volunteers of various requirements to develop various programmes.
- 2) If new demands are not met and new programmes are not planned, new participants may not come.
- 3) The educational value decreases and the opportunity to have rewarding experiences is lost, wasting the time of the participants.
- 4) Locals do not see volunteers in a positive light, feeling as though they are invaders, leading to a loss of volunteers who do not have a pleasant experience.
- 5) The meaning of living together in a favourable atmosphere is underemphasised and the experience of volunteering becomes banal.
- 6) Not developing a plan that can become a viable tourism option.
- 7) Lack of development of a plan and lack of economic return for the territory.
- 8) Lack of response to requirements of volunteers, leading to a loss of quality and inefficient plan.

Economic aspects of the programme

For every type of programme (green, red, blue, etc.) the volunteer should pay a registration fee that represents definitive confirmation of participation. Rates vary based on type of programme and administrative preference of the park. Rates may be less for younger volunteers, and the rate for some programmes covers the expenses of room and board.

The park offers, beyond lodging, a contribution of EUR 7 per day per person during the volunteer's time; the treasurer will be tasked with holding the total amount and will justify expenses through tickets and receipts. The contribution is personal. If a participant does not complete his course, the participant's quota must be returned. Participants may choose to personally manage quotas, but this obviously loses the aspect of sharing everyday life.

Electricity and a gas tank are provided free of charge. Volunteers are insured for the entire period of residence in the park. The policy does not cover the period of time spent travelling or any residence beyond the term of service.

Challenges of implementation

In this outline, the main managerial aspects of volunteer service are analysed from different points of view: those of external communication management and internal management.

The possible strengths and weaknesses of the system are considered below. The "opportunities" and "threats" listed below represent results should weaknesses not be addressed.

Issues and aspects you should not forget: Ten suggestions on organising a good volunteer service



1) Verify organisational conditions, internal conditions and willpower. The management of a programme of volunteer service for nature needs a specific organisation dedicated to the park's general organisation. The volunteer service programme cannot be a secondary activity for some office or staff, but requires specialists.

2) Verify the presence and availability of suitable structures. It is important to know if there are public structures and if it is possible to use them. Minimal structures are sufficient for a pilot plan, but they must be pleasant and in keeping with the plan.

3) Verify the possibility of collaboration with the local territory and its potential in terms of volunteer activity. Be sure to have a clear idea of what is actually available in terms of planning a meaningful interactive activity, e.g. collaboration with local

craftsmen, volunteers and associations, shepherds and breeders. This allows local inhabitants to feel value in their own roles and experiences. For the volunteers, it is important to understand and to learn from traditions.

4) Elaborate a simple and clear plan. Define a plan including mission, vision, objectives, action strategies, and a context vision. Define your plan with a clear message, a symbol and practical activities. For example, volunteers may be told, "you are working with us to save the pelican from extinction and to protect its environment and the life of the human population living here."

5) Share and communicate the plan with the territory during the planning phase and development. In this way, the local population will not perceive volunteers as colonisers and "controllers of their

transactions.” Participatory planning allows the territory to contribute to the plan, lets volunteers establish contacts and true collaboration with people, eliminates conflicts and incomprehension, and favours mutual enrichment. It is possible to use official moments of community such as festivals, meetings, conventions, etc., but true sharing comes from everyday life in which volunteers enter into spontaneous relationships with the local population.

6) Train the staff and preview a process of continuous training for staff. Staff must be able to manage group dynamics, even including the possibility of problematic volunteers. In a wide-reaching programme such as the ViP, it is normal to encounter those with ailments who demand continuous care. This is a rich educational opportunity, but staff must be trained in such matters.

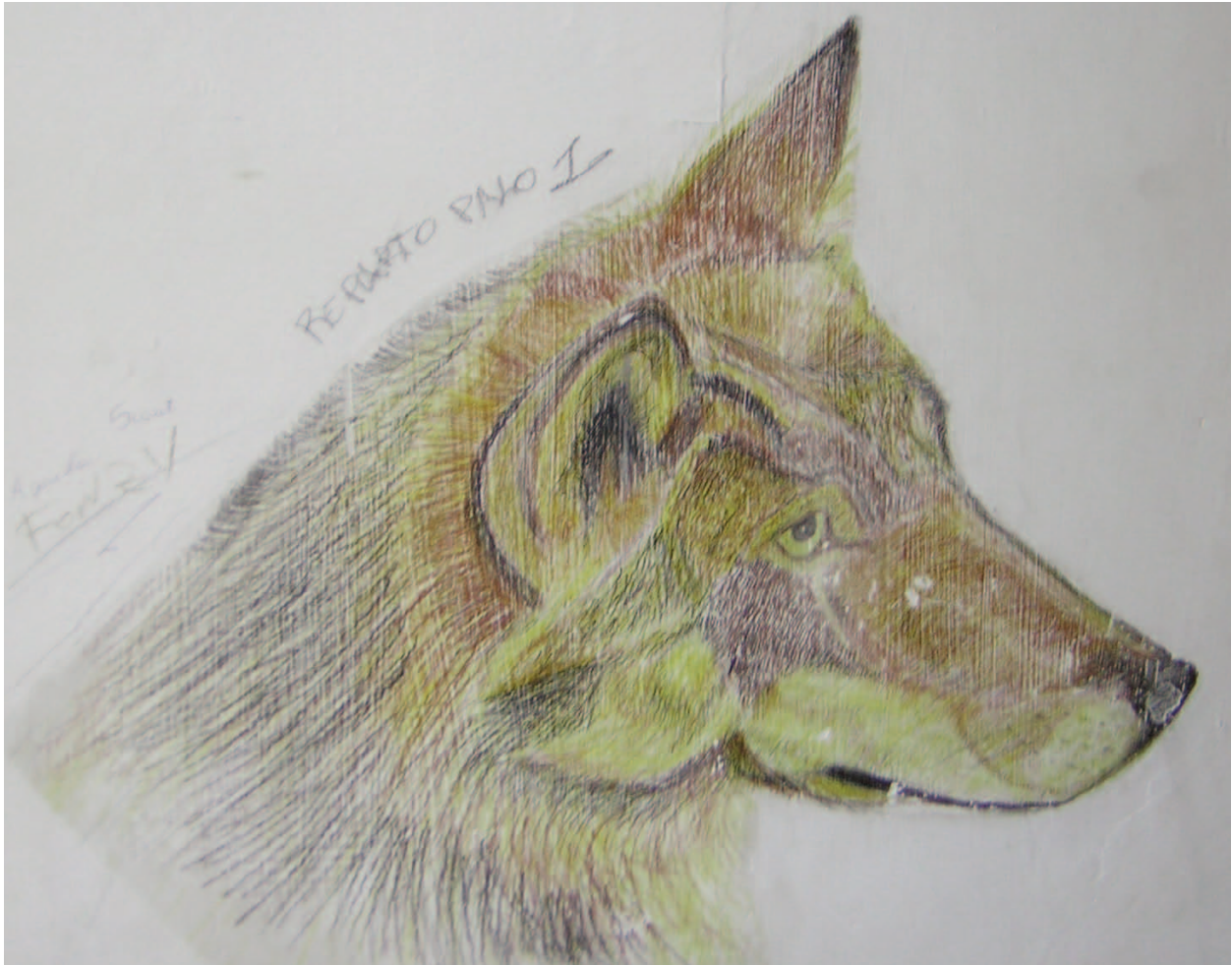
7) Start a project simply and realise an introductory plan addressed to everyone. The project may grow later to include different programmes based on changing requirements. No two plans or volunteer groups are alike, and so staff must be dynamic and flexible, adapting programmes and activities to new contingencies. Always keep in mind the mission, the objectives and the values of the plan.

8) Connect with other nature volunteer service programmes and environmental associations. Such connections can be useful in constructing a network of exchange and sharing of experiences and ability. It is possible that groups of volunteers will spontaneously organise themselves in associations to build on the experiences with you. These groups are an enormous resource for the spread of the volunteer spirit and for the support and the realisation of plans in other areas.

9) Fine-tune educational activities. Plan new activities to enrich future programme offerings by being open to proposals of volunteers, as personal relationships are the strongest point of this programme. Prepare a mailing list, contacts and links. Document the volunteer service as much as possible with products made by volunteers, postcards, photos, written, diaries, etc.

10) Take care of structures in terms of sustainability of resources and materials. Take care of separated waste collection and composting. Create an organic garden to be tended by the volunteers. Use ecological materials, avoid use of plastic kitchen utensils, and use energy efficient lamps. Above all, remember that the most important principle is to behave in harmony with nature.





Volunteers tell of their experiences with animals

On the radio: "Help! I am alone, my patrol has gone ahead and I see...I see a bear at the edge of the forest. What do I do? Help me!"

- "You are very lucky! You have to be happy!"

- "Ah, but ... he's gone ... thanks!"

On the radio (in a low voice): "This is the 'Squirrel' patrol team. We arrived at Lake Vivo and there are 10 wonderful red deer! How nice! We are hidden here to observe, we will eat a sandwich here and then return."

At the Casone: We're in the kitchen, it is a wonderful autumn evening when a loud noise comes from the courtyard. We take a look and... there was a female bear pounding at the door of the warehouse, trying to open it!

These and thousands of other stories are based on the relationship between volunteers and animals, their fears, desires, and experiences in nature that surely will change them.

After these experiences, many volunteers have written to us, communicating their emotions, reflections and life choices, revealing to us that those experiences have guided important and fundamental decisions for their future.

Anecdotes: Yoga and the Casone

A female bear — given the name “Yoga” — was approximately three years of age when she began wandering around the Casone, occasionally at first and then with increasing frequency, crossing the parking lot to eat pears and plums from two old trees in the garden and sunflower seeds from the bird feeder.

In 1995, she entered the Casone for the first time, through a space near the stairs where refuse bins are stored.

From that moment, the separated collection was moved into the woodshed and the door secured with a strong chain. Yoga was not able to open the door, and so scrambled up to the window to search for entry. Habitually, she continued to return to the place where she had found food. Though the door was closed, it would be easily opened but never was.

One day, rather than returning from behind, the bear reared up on her hind legs on the front step, standing taller than the door by a good 20-30 centimetres and then pushed it open. From that day forward, the bear was able to open the door by standing on two feet and touching the door handle.

From that time, the large wood door of the Casone was closed at 6 o'clock in the afternoon.

In that period one of the main arguments during volunteer training was the behaviour with the “friendly” bear: Many volunteers had not ever seen so much as a fox before coming to the park. The bear was named “Yoga” in reference to the similar behaviour exhibited by Yogi Bear of cartoon fame.

The fauna area of the volunteers

Wounded or sick animals are often found in the park. These are usually nursed to health and, when possible, released into the wild or in larger protected areas where they can continue to live. These areas have a twofold function: They are important for conservation and for environmental education of people without the opportunity to see wild animals.

One day, early in the morning, two volunteers were hiking a path open only to a limited number of visitors because a rare population of chamois lives there.

In this area lies a spring that supplies water to a small village; this is fenced in so that domestic animals do not pollute the spring. From behind a juniper bush a great bear emerged. When he saw the volunteers, the bear hurriedly crossed the small glade and disappeared into the forest.

The two scared volunteers jumped the fence surrounding the source and stayed there for more than two hours until park operators found them.

Known formerly as the Iannaghera Spring, the area is now referred to as “the fauna area of the volunteers.”

Surrender!

The volunteers are organised in patrols of two or three persons and supplied with radios to easily communicate with park operators when on long excursions on mountain trails. The reasons for such activities are to gain knowledge of the territory, to acquire information on the routes, to clean up refuse, and to provide information to visitors. The advantages of the radio are that it does not carry call charges and the communication is heard by all volunteers. A patrol was lost on the path by a few hundred metres. They radioed the operators to get information as to how to continue down the path. In order to give this information the operators needed their location. The apprehensive answer was: “We are in a small glade and we are encircled by trees. What must we do?” Before the operator could answer, a determined voice got on the radio to exclaim, “Surrender!”

Networking and international dimensions of volunteering



The Volunteering for Nature Programme is a great opportunity for collaboration between states and parks in the development of networks of human resources and professionals from NGOs at the European and global levels.

From this viewpoint, the voluntary service for nature can supply an important opportunity to engage people and to promote nature protection and a greater respect for life. The service can also supply protected areas and conservation management with a “union of special persons” who can promote ideas and strategies of conservation.

Other parks in Italy are developing voluntary service programmes on the model created by National

Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise (Gran Paradiso National Park, Arcipelago Toscano National Park, Cilento e Vallo di Diano National Park).

Many volunteers who have participated in past years’ programmes of the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise have created non-profit associations to spread the idea of organising activities in nature, sometimes supporting agency managers in protected areas for the implementation of voluntary service programmes and environmental education. Arctos ONLUS is an organisation founded by a group of people who met as volunteers in the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise. Today, Arctos ONLUS acts with volunteers to “promote and defend nature in all its forms.”

First meeting of the European Voluntary Service for the Nature

In the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise, Italy, on September 16-18, 2005, the First Meeting of the European Voluntary Service for Nature was organised by the park in collaboration with the L'Umana Dimora Onlus Lazio environmental association, Arctos European Volunteer Wildlife Association and the Amici della Camosciara association, with the patronage of the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, the Italian Federation of Parks and Nature Reserves (Federparchi) and the Organisation of Europe's Protected Areas (Europarc).

In three days of seminars and working groups, trekking tours were alternated with moments of common sharing. An exhibition of posters, photos, images, and videos was prepared by the volunteers with the theme "the story and the emotions of passion for nature."

The meeting's aims, on which volunteers are still working, include:

- Outlining of the "Paper of the Voluntary Service for Nature," a document to be drafted in cooperation with the Volunteers of Europe that defines the values, objectives, abilities and knowledge of the volunteers in connection with park service. The paper also indicates the actions to realise and develop the voluntary service to support nature.
- Creation of a database of volunteers, which collects in logical and organised fashion the experiences and the abilities of volunteers to become an instrument for organisation of groups and involvement of volunteers where nature protection is needed. This database would be very useful for finding volunteers with specific abilities and availability. The database is open and continuously evolving.
- Establishment of a Network of European Voluntary Service for Nature, which is an Internet-based communication network that will connect the world of Europe's volunteers for nature, allowing realisation of further plans, collaboration and exchange of volunteers, ideas and values.

Volunteers at local and regional levels are active citizens committed to European values who can play a key role in promoting values if a European dimension is given to their activities. At the European level, there is currently no targeted funding for a European support infrastructure for volunteering: An international structure is needed to exchange information and best practices; to build capacity; to contribute to a common understanding of the volunteerism in Europe; to channel information between national, grass roots, and European Union levels; to give volunteers a voice within the EU; and to add a European dimension to the innumerable activities of volunteers throughout Europe.

It is important to stress the obvious link between volunteering and active citizenship to enhance the vast

potential of volunteers recognising a European dimension to their engagement at a local level; those staff responsible for programmes or protected areas should provide statistics regarding the economic value of volunteering. Should the statistical office of EUROSTAT urge member states to create funds for volunteering, only what is accounted for will be considered.

A special focus is given to the creation of working groups and single access points at the Commission and the Parliament in order to join efforts to work concretely on the above-mentioned steps. The Commission should also publish a white paper on volunteering. Starting from volunteering for nature and recognising the horizontal nature of volunteering in its different policy areas, this could be an effective instrument in working toward a volunteer-friendly society.

THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (REC) is a non-partisan, non-advocacy, not-for-profit international organisation with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The center fulfils this mission by promoting cooperation among non-governmental organisations, governments, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, and by supporting the free exchange of information and public participation in environmental decision making.

The REC was established in 1990 by the United States, the European Commission and Hungary. Today, the REC is legally based on a charter signed by the governments of 28 countries and the European Commission, and on an international agreement with the government of Hungary. The REC has its head office in Szentendre, Hungary, and country offices and field offices in 17 beneficiary countries, which are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey.

Recent donors are the European Commission and the governments of Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as other inter-governmental and private institutions.

L'UMANA DIMORA ONLUS LAZIO is an environmental association recognised as an "Association of Environmental Protection" by the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea. From the beginning, the association has distinguished itself by prioritising the presence of man in nature. Protection of natural resources, the education of young people and the promotion of sustainable development are the group's main fields of work.

L'Umana Dimora Onlus Lazio's activities aim to: develop strategies linked with preservation and defence of all life (people, animals and plants) in its own habitat, through the commitment of cooperatives, associations, public offices and NGOs; raise awareness of environmental issues through training courses addressed at young environmental leaders, farmers, public administrators, municipal staff, teachers, and environmental educators; organise vocational training and to assist with institution building; promote initiatives in rural areas to stop the migration to urban areas and to valorise traditional products and organic agriculture; support environmental research through communication with the public; link institutions and people in the field of nature protection; and educate young people to respect the environment and live in a more sustainable way.



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



*The Italian Ministry of
Environment, Land and Sea*



L'Umana Dimora Onlus Lazio