



On the Central Apennines from Monte Velino to the Gran Sasso: the biodiversity adventure

In the context of EXPO2015, ecologists and researchers are proposing an itinerary on foot from Monte Velino to the Gran Sasso mountains to recount the environment of the Apennines amidst nature reserves, national parks, history and culture.

Italian researchers active in long-term ecological research on ecosystems (LTER-Italia Network) and biodiversity (LifeWatch) will be accompanying citizens along three science awareness itineraries, as scientific communication initiatives associated with EXPO2015 and supported by the Italian National Research Council (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, CNR).

This itinerary crosses the Abruzzo mountains from Monte Velino to the Gran Sasso via L'Aquila, linking two high altitude LTER sites, both managed by the Italian National Forest Service (Corpo Forestale dello Stato, CFS). Mostly on foot, it crosses the characteristic landscape of the inner Central Apennines, from mixed woodland to beech woods and high altitude grassland with very high biodiversity values. The itinerary crosses areas of high environmental and tourist value and two natural parks, one regional (the Sirente-Velino) and the other national (Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga). It will start with activities on Monte Velino including vegetation surveys and ornithological observations. Participants will be accompanied by botanists, ornithologists and geologists throughout the itinerary. The final day, 1 August, will see researchers, amateur naturalists and volunteers working together on the Gran Sasso in an intensive field study ("BioBlitz") to identify all the plant and animal species living in the area, thus contributing to defining the state of the biodiversity.

The trail will start on 29 July, 2015 to coincide with the event *Ecosistemi e biodiversità: la scienza al servizio dei cittadini*, organised by the LTER Network and LifeWatch at *Padiglione Italia* of EXPO2015.

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